Teachers and the Practice of Leadership

Enabling Change for Transformation and Social Justice

David Frost, Judy Durrant, Val Hill, Gary Holden and Amanda Roberts

SUPPORT MATERIAL

ROUTLEDGE

TEACHERS AND THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Driven by the pursuit of social justice and quality in education, this inspirational book offers an alternative vision of leadership in education. It argues that teachers, regardless of status or position, should be empowered to exercise leadership in the pursuit of educational change and improvement.

Drawing from over three decades of practical experience and research in initiating and supporting non-positional teacher leadership in more than 20 countries, the authors make a persuasive case for the value of empowering teachers as agents of change. Chapters demonstrate the practical benefits that come from empowerment such as the development of innovative practice in classrooms and schools, the transformation of professional cultures in schools, an enhanced sense of agency and self-efficacy for teachers, and vibrant knowledge building in educational systems. As well as implications for policy and practice, the book includes a guide to practical strategies for improvements in educational provision and the quality of learning in schools. Downloadable guidance material and workshop tools, applicable to a wide variety of international contexts, are available online, free of charge.

Essential reading for teachers, school leaders and policymakers with responsibility for educational leadership, the book will also be of use for scholars and students of educational reform, as well as administrators working in school improvement and educational policy.

David Frost is an Emeritus Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge, UK. He founded and directed the HertsCam Network which provided support for teacher leadership in schools in the UK and internationally.

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Amanda Roberts was a school principal before becoming an academic and senior leader at the University of Hertfordshire's School of Education, UK.

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FOREWORD

Jo Mylles

You are fortunate to have discovered a book which is inspiring, encouraging and practical. I feel privileged to be asked to write a Foreword for it.

This book is inspiring because it gives us a fresh perspective on school leadership and educational change. The critical analysis provided here is sharp and focused on what really matters, but it also offers a very exciting alternative way forward for educational change.

It is encouraging because it makes a compelling case for a more democratic and inclusive approach to leadership in schools. The 'non-positional teacher leadership' approach can enable all practitioners in schools, regardless of their status or position, to enact what they instinctively want to do – to develop their practice and the practice of others so that children and young people in their care can benefit and flourish.

It is practical because it contains rich stories of non-positional teacher leadership which are celebratory but crucially address the 'how': how schools can develop collaborative cultures within which members of staff can thrive, how schools can reconfigure their perceptions of leadership and repurpose power to support teachers as they take forward development projects, rather than directing them. It also shows how schools and systems can develop networks to enable members of staff to collaborate and support each other in developing their understanding of leadership and learning. It describes workshop activities designed to ensure that teachers' development work is sustainable, embedded and has maximum impact. The book and the accompanying support materials document teacher leadership across the UK, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. This richness is a major strength. Readers are connected in a tangible way to other systems and teachers' stories which exemplify teachers' desire to exercise agency and make a difference.

This book may be disquieting for some education leaders and policy makers because it challenges the embedded hierarchical conception of educational

leadership. Furthermore, it calls upon us all to reflect on how to ensure that teachers are engaged and fulfilled in their work by enabling them to participate in the process of school development. This involves supporting them as engines of change in their schools – authors of change, rather than the recipients of someone else's ideas and wishes. The book argues powerfully that if teachers and schools are to address issues of social justice, the agency of teachers needs to be front and centre in these endeavours.

Schools are not hermetically sealed from the world around them. Children of all ages are acutely interested in the wider world and are concerned about issues of social justice. Current and future generations of children face, and will continue to face, considerable challenges of climate change, conflict across the world and inequalities. Our young people will provide the energy, imagination and leadership to address these issues. Their moral purpose, agency and leadership will be pivotal to address these issues of social justice and to make the transformation needed. Young people spend a good deal of their time in school alongside their teachers and other education support staff – what better inspiration for children than to see those around them leading change, exercising agency, guided by a strong moral purpose, and crucially making a difference to their educational experience and enabling them to fulfil their learning potential?

I have worked in schools for nearly 40 years as a teacher, senior leader and most recently as a headteacher (school principal). Across my career, I have had a developing understanding and commitment to teacher leadership. It is clear to me that if improvements in schools are to have longevity and endure, leaders in schools need to ensure that all members of the school community know they can lead within a context where values and vision are shared and understood. Leadership is the business of all in schools and leaders should use their influence and power to harness the huge potential of teacher agency to bring about sustainable school development. This shift requires strategic intent: this book gives school and system leaders the intellectual underpinnings of the rationale for teacher leadership being an integral part of development in schools and explores how this can be achieved through practical strategies.

This book is an uplifting and optimistic read which, alongside the support materials, will enable schools across the world to take steps towards supporting teacher leadership in different contexts and different school systems.

Read it, treasure it and commit yourself, wherever you are and whatever your role or position, to develop this democratic approach to leadership to ensure sustainable change for social justice in schools across the globe.

Jo Mylles
National Leader of Education and former Headteacher of Challney High School for Girls, Luton, UK

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University of Sofia, Bulgaria
Wolfson College, Cambridge

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Judy Durrant was a schoolteacher before leading postgraduate courses and school development projects at Canterbury Christ Church University for nearly three decades. Her academic and professional interests and publications focus on teacher leadership, action research and professional learning, identity and agency. She has contributed to teacher leadership programmes internationally.

Val Hill is a former assistant headteacher of a Hertfordshire secondary school. She coordinated the HertsCam Network and taught on its masters programme with the University of Cambridge and the University of Hertfordshire. She has contributed to developing teacher leadership in Central Asia, Europe and the Western Balkans.

Gary Holden has worked as a teacher, school principal, Academy Trust CEO, local authority adviser and school inspector in a career spanning almost 40 years. In addition, he has taught on masters programmes for serving teachers at two universities. His previous publications have focused on aspects of teacher leadership and professional development.

Amanda Roberts was a school principal before becoming an academic and senior leader at the University of Hertfordshire's School of Education. She has

played a key role in the development of the HertsCam Network and the International Teacher Leadership initiative. Currently, she is developing innovations within the field of palliative care.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CANTARNET	The Canterbury Action Research Network was formed in the 1990s by staff at Canterbury Christ Church College and a group of teachers to provide networking opportunities.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EI	Education International is a global federation of teacher organisations, based in Brussels.
GPE	The Global Partnership for Education works with governments to transform education systems.
HertsCam Network	Originally a partnership between the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and Hertfordshire Education Service, in 2012 the HertsCam Network became a not-for-profit, independent registered charity, formed to support and promote non-positional teacher leadership.
IDRC	The International Development Research Centre is part of Canada's foreign affairs and development efforts. It funds research and innovation in developing regions globally.
KIX	The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange is a joint endeavour between GPE and IDRC, listed above.
MAT	A multi-academy trust is a government approved, semi-autonomous cluster of schools in England.
NFER	The National Foundation for Educational Research is a not-for-profit registered charity based in the UK which conducts research into education.
NGO	A non-governmental organisation is typically a philanthropic foundation established to address particular social issues.

NORRAG	The Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training is a large organisation which co-produces and disseminates knowledge in the 'global south'.
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is an intergovernmental organisation based in Paris, France.
PIRLS	The Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study.
PISA	This is the Programme for International Student Assessment. It is an OECD exercise which collects data every three years on 15-year-old children's ability in reading, mathematics, science and life skills.
TIMSS	This is the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning is a non-profit, international research, training, information and publishing centre on literacy, non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning.
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is an agency of the United Nations based in Paris, France. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture.
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund was established in 1946 to help children in need and protect the rights and wellbeing of all children.
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development was, until February 2025, an independent agency of the US government. It worked to end extreme global poverty and to support the continuing development of democratic societies.

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AN OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

Our aim in this book is to reflect on and share what we have learned about educational change, leadership and the role of the teacher. We present evidence which supports a proposal for a particular approach to enabling teacher-led change that can transform educational provision. Our perspective as authors has been shaped by more than 30 years of practical experience and scholarship. We have all served as teachers in the state school system in England, some of us taking on senior leadership positions. We have also had academic roles in universities, engaged in consultancy and one of us has led school inspections. Throughout this time, we have engaged in research, formal postgraduate study and writing for publication. The book's title, *Teachers and the Practice of Leadership: Enabling Change for Transformation and Social Justice*, is intended to reflect the moral purpose that drives our work: our shared commitment to maximising children's life chances through high-quality and equitable education.

We believe that teachers have a crucial leadership role to play in realising this vision. Consequently, we have developed practical strategies over more than three decades to enable teachers to exercise leadership. The strategies we discuss in this book have been refined through a process of adaptation and adjustment, always informed by scholarship – our own, that of numerous colleagues, collaborators and the many teachers we have worked with. To call this 'trial and error' would imply a lack of analysis and reflection which would be far from the truth. We could also use terms such as 'reflective practice' (Schon, 1983) or 'experiential learning' (Kolb, 1984) to describe what we do. These concepts certainly help to explain our method of knowledge creation but, as we argue in greater detail in subsequent chapters, we believe our approach might usefully be construed as a form of 'praxis', the origins of which can be traced back to Aristotle. We understand praxis to include the pursuit of moral action through which theoretical understanding grows (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). This is explored in Chapter 2.

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There can be no doubt that transformation of educational provision is badly needed. The use of the word 'crisis' is entirely justified, especially if we look at education from a global perspective (World Bank, UNESCO & UNICEF, 2021). UNESCO's global monitoring reports (e.g. UNESCO, 2015) indicate that many millions of children do not have access to even the most basic levels of schooling and progress over the last ten years towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) has been slow (Roser, 2021; UNDP, 2024).

Even in education systems in the so-called developed world, there is no room for complacency. In England, for example, the term 'attainment gap' is used to refer to the fact that disadvantaged children fare less well at school than those from wealthier families (Staton, 2022), a situation described by the Sutton Trust as 'a ticking time bomb for future mobility and social cohesion' (Sutton Trust, 2024: 2). A cursory look at international comparative data collected through exercises such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS tells us that such differential attainment is common in developed countries. These differences may be evident when comparing pupils' outcomes between countries, between regions within countries and between schools themselves. School effectiveness research over the last three decades has pointed to stark differences even between comparable classrooms within the same school (Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore, 1997; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Luyten, 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005; Anderson, 2019), a phenomenon observed in most OECD member countries (OECD, 2009). So, wherever we look, there is work to be done to increase radically the extent of the provision of educational opportunity and improve the quality of that provision. These are matters of social justice, whether we are concerned with provision for children in our local school or children globally.

Policy interventions

Urged on by civil society organisations such as the World Bank, OECD and UNESCO, policy makers across the world have sought to initiate educational reform focused on matters such as the examination system, the school curriculum, teacher recruitment and so on. Policy makers have a variety of levers at their disposal. They can draft legislation, employ panels of experts to produce guidelines for schools or write directly to school principals to clarify or update regulations. The intention invariably is to mandate changes in behaviour on the part of practitioners, but this is often problematic and can even be counterproductive by leading for example to increased accountability measures and workloads which undermine teacher professionalism and the quality of education (Fink, 2003).

A significant issue with policy-led change concerns fidelity – the extent to which practices arising from a particular policy match the aims of the intervention (O'Donnell, 2008). Practitioners tend to adapt innovations in the light of local contexts and knowledge or beliefs about the particularities of the pupils, the school structure or the community served by the school. Those who design interventions on behalf of policy makers tend to find the term 'teacher-

proof curriculum' (Eryaman & Riedler, 2010) appealing since it suggests that implementation is straightforward and will be unaffected by the vicissitudes of context. However, others propose an alternative construction – the 'curriculum-proof teacher' – which indicates the extent to which teachers exercise their judgement and adapt curricular specifications (Westwood Taylor, 2013). Central to such debates is the question of teachers' agency and the corresponding levels of commitment and capacity for change. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Sometimes, intervention by policy makers is indirect, creating new conditions in the form of administrative requirements or accountability procedures, on the assumption that practice will shift in the desired direction as a result. Such approaches correspond with so-called 'nudge theory' (Abdukadirov, 2016). For example, in England, schools are inspected under a framework which is amended frequently. Predictably, schools look carefully at this framework to try to ensure that when an inspection takes place, they will be able to demonstrate that they are performing well against the various indicators. A former Chief Inspector of schools in England has highlighted the practice of some schools 'gaming the system' by 'teaching to the test' rather than offering children a sufficiently broad and balanced curriculum (Jack, 2020). However, with such a lot at stake, it is hardly surprising that some school principals will take steps of various kinds to achieve what appears to be the desired result.

In developing countries, it is not uncommon for schools to be asked to participate in programmes of innovation arising from initiatives by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and external sponsors. For example, Project Lehar in India enables girls who have dropped out of education to go back to school to get qualified and find employment. This project has been funded by the United Nations Population Fund, the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Prince's Trust (Keevil, 2023). These sorts of interventions can be problematic if there is only a loose link between the project team and the relevant government authority. The APREME project, in which we were involved, is illustrative. The project, funded by the EU and Open Society Foundations, aimed to highlight the problem of a lack of inclusion of ethnic minority families in the life of the school in countries in the Western Balkans (Vranješević & Frost, 2016). However, while the challenge of inclusion was a key issue for the donors and project managers, it was seen as less of a priority by government ministers (Frost et al., 2010), which made it difficult to sustain the innovations that arose. It is evident, therefore, that however well-meaning supra-national interventions may be, unless there is buy-in on the part of the relevant national authorities, the impact of such interventions will be limited (Spicer, 2018).

The challenge of implementation

The lack of government support is not the only obstacle to sustaining innovation. Even when governments have initiated reform, plans for implementation

may be inadequate. This was noted in a substantial literature review conducted by OECD.

> Educational policies seem to be developed with little consideration for the practical mechanisms necessary to their implementation. Questions such as 'do teachers have the skills to teach this new curriculum?' are often overlooked.
>
> *(Viennet & Pont, 2017: 11)*

Of course, the challenge involves so much more than teachers having the necessary skills. As we discuss in Chapter 3, for educational reform to be successful, there needs to be a well-designed implementation strategy based on an adequate theory of change (Stein & Valters, 2012). It is vital for teachers to be at the centre of any change process but unfortunately the role of the teacher is often neglected in educational reform. The observation below from an article about teacher education policies in Latin America some years ago is still recognisable in many parts of the world today.

> Often reforms are decided, new curricula and textbooks are written, and teachers are merely informed of their contents and procedures through participation in a few in-service days.
>
> *(Avalos, 2000)*

The reference to 'in-service days' points to the question of how teachers can become equipped to change their practice in accordance with the new reform. Some reforms have implementation strategies that include provision for what is invariably referred to as 'training', a concept that is rarely problematised in policy documents and public discourse. In debates about policy and change, a sound implementation plan is said to include a strategy for training teachers as if those at the centre can specify the knowledge and skills that teachers will need. Typical recommendations in reports arguably constitute an orthodoxy in which the question of teacher agency, and indeed the agency of other professionals involved in educating children, is not fully considered. We discuss these issues in some depth in Chapter 3.

Implementation strategies are more likely to succeed if they include the participation of teachers as key stakeholders. OECD reported on deliberations involving education ministries in which the following was agreed.

> Policy makers need to build consensus on the aims of educational reform and actively engage stakeholders, especially teachers, in formulating and implementing policy responses.
>
> *(Schleicher, 2011: 57)*

This seems to be heading in the right direction and chimes with the growing discourse about co-design in public service development which is particularly

well-developed in Australia (Blomkamp, 2017; 2018). However, even if teachers have been consulted, and even if some teachers have been co-opted into the process of co-design, compliance and alignment are nevertheless required once the policy has been decided upon. The resulting policy change, therefore, is likely to be experienced by most teachers as external intervention in which they are cast as implementers rather than initiators.

We are encouraged to see it increasingly recognised that enabling and valorising teachers' voices is crucial for teacher retention (UNESCO, 2023a). For us, voice goes hand-in-hand with teacher leadership. The concept note that accompanied the invitation to participate in a recent World Teachers' Day webinar, held by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, included this statement.

> As active agents of change, teachers possess capacities to influence educational practices and shape learning environments.
>
> *(UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2024)*

One of the webinar speakers from the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 drew attention to the call for 'a new social contract for education', one that values teacher voices and promotes collaborative decision-making and innovation (UNESCO, 2024a). This resonates with our own call for teacher-led change, although our emphasis is on the provision of support that will enable teachers to clarify their professional concerns and agendas for change and to plan and lead their own development projects.

Teacher-led change

We wholeheartedly support the idea of policy development based on co-design and stakeholder participation but want to extend this by advocating for teacher-led change. We are not naively imagining a world without policy initiatives from the centre; on the contrary, we have argued that policy should create the conditions for change and provide the support that would enable it to happen (Bangs & Frost, 2012; 2015). However, what we focus on here is the missing piece of the jigsaw which was expressed rather well in the title of the book *Awakening the Sleeping Giant of Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). This gave us a powerful slogan because it suggested that amongst teachers there is huge, untapped potential to exercise leadership. Our position in this book builds on this and argues the case for 'non-positional teacher leadership' (Frost, 2011; 2017), in which every practitioner within a school, regardless of their formal position, can be enabled to exercise leadership. We have argued for some years that the exercise of leadership should be seen as an essential element of any and all teachers' work (Hill, 2014). This raises the fundamental question of what it is to be a teacher, which we discuss in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, we examine established approaches to the initiation and management of change and our analysis is shaped by our concern with social

justice. Rincón-Gallardo (2019) argued that there has been a schism between the field of educational change and that of social justice, with issues of power and liberation being neglected in the former. Our analysis and the strategies we offer have the potential to reconcile the pragmatics of educational change policy with the imperative of social justice. The key to this reconciliation is the professionality of teachers – the aforementioned sleeping giant. They are the actors in the educational moment which is clearly expressed at the beginning of a recent report from the UNESCO Teachers Task Force 2030:

> Over the course of an average day, teachers make a countless number of decisions to improve their students' learning and well-being. Judgements may range from selecting relevant pedagogical approaches and resources when adapting content to implementing appropriate classroom management strategies.
>
> *(UNESCO, 2024a: 3)*

The decisions referred to in the extract above could be thought of as opportunities to address matters of social injustice. Discussions about social justice pedagogy can focus on the needs and rights of categories of people with particular characteristics but our concern is with the children and young people who are obliged to attend school. We recognise that schools have the potential for injustice because they operate in an age of performativity and are subject to punitive accountability regimes (Wrigley, 2022). However, teachers have some capacity to pursue social justice both through choices and decisions in their everyday practice and by taking the initiative to launch development projects that could remedy a situation in which particular groups of students are not realising their full potential as learners. In either case, the reconciliation between the pragmatics of educational change and the goal of social justice can happen when the teacher's moral purpose is mobilised (Fullan, 1993a). It is the individual teacher who, working within the parameters of the system they find themselves in, bring their educational principles and moral purpose to bear in the interests of the students before them. This was illustrated in a story about a teacher's response to the challenge of teaching disaffected students who were on the brink of being excluded from school in England. In the special unit established to support schools in her region, she provided a series of group sessions for children who had been identified by schools as being in need of this intervention. She used innovative methods to empower these students and enable them ultimately to achieve what was specified within the national curriculum (Frost, 2023).

We recognise, as others do, that there will be variety in teachers' values and moral stance (Greany, 2024), but the proposition is that most teachers, if they have the opportunity to reflect on the matter, would say that their moral purpose is to enable all students to fulfil their learning potential. Our argument is that any tensions there might be between educational reform and social justice can be addressed when teachers have a strong sense of agency. As Michael

Fullan said: 'Moral purpose without change agentry is martyrdom' (1993a: 3). Our discussion about change is framed by what we understand about the links between human agency, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and levels of staff morale. In the earlier stages of our work, we found support for the idea of teacher-led change in Fullan's paper, *Why Teachers Must Become Change Agents* (1993a), and in an argument advanced by Linda Lambert – one that was quoted at the beginning of the second edition of Katzenmeyer and Moller's book (2001).

> Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader. Leading is skilled and complicated work that can be learned by every member of the school community. Democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
>
> *(Lambert, 1998: 9)*

Lambert's use of the word 'rights' may sound alarm bells for some, especially in contexts where there is a highly politicised struggle between authoritarian governments and teacher unions. However, we have seen that where school principals have adopted leadership for all as a principle, they find that levels of collegiality and cohesion within the school as an organisation are increased. Such matters are discussed in Chapter 6.

Reshaping school leadership

In this book, we seek to challenge traditional power structures. We examine the landscape of educational leadership and argue the case for transformational leadership (Day & Sammons, 2013). A key dimension of this is the idea that school principals and others at the apex of their organisations need to empower those around them. This idea was expressed a hundred years ago by Mary Parker Follet (Follet, 1924). Follet's work has been influential in the field of organisational theory and management, although the idea of transformational leadership is usually attributed either to Burns (1978) or Bass (1995). School leadership is explored at length in Chapter 4.

One of the difficulties in educational discourse and practice is compartmentalisation in which leadership and management belongs in one box, teaching and pedagogy in another and teachers' professional learning in another. This stands in the way of developing an approach to schooling in which professional practice can change and improve and so address core purposes such as enabling all students to fully realise their potential. This more holistic view was the focus of the 'Leadership for Learning' (LfL) project at the University of Cambridge (Frost et al., 2008; MacBeath et al., 2018), which presented a framework that incorporates both leadership and learning with human agency as a common driver. In the LfL model, leadership and learning are construed as activities both of which depend on human agency. If both are effectively enabled, they become inextricably linked and each enhances the other. From the

LfL perspective, leadership should be focused on learning and should entail learning. This extends Donald Schon's conceptualisation of 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' (Schon, 1983). Similarly, learning should require initiation and self-directed action and other hallmarks of leadership. In this vein, we argue that teachers' professional learning is most powerful when it arises from their self-directed action to address issues of immediate concern to them. This is demonstrated and exemplified in Chapter 6, where we explore professional learning, not as an isolated topic, but as one of the outcomes of teacher-led change. The focus is on the mobilisation of human agency and the enhancement of agency and self-efficacy when teachers are enabled to self-direct their professional learning. This offers an alternative to the dominant training approach which emphasises the 'delivery' of professional knowledge and behaviour modification (Frost, 2017). We argue that training, as this is usually interpreted, diminishes teachers' choice and control in the content and process of their learning. We are arguing instead for a more agential approach.

Empowering and enabling teachers

Teachers cannot be expected to become self-directed change agents who exercise leadership without a transformative model of support. Most teachers work within a milieu in which there is a deeply ingrained assumption that leadership is restricted to those at the apex of their organisations and those who have delegated authority linked to formal positions. However, with an appropriate form of support, the grip of this assumption can be loosened. This is why at the core of our work is the development of strategies for empowering and enabling teachers as agents of change regardless of any positions of authority or responsibility. In Chapter 5, we discuss the nature of these strategies which are essentially facilitative. The slippery concept of facilitation is explored and clarified before we draw on evidence from our own work over many years to exemplify and illustrate how facilitation can work. Examples are drawn from programmes we have helped to found in the UK and many other countries under the banner of the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative (Frost, 2011). In ITL, we worked with partners in locations as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, Palestine and Kazakhstan to devise and launch school-based teacher leadership programmes. Key elements of facilitation illuminated in Chapter 5 include building a sense of community in school-based support groups; using workshop tools to enable participants to engage in collective reflection, deliberation, discussion and planning; collaborating with facilitators and principals in other schools to arrange networking opportunities; and enabling participants to document their endeavours and be recognised for their achievement through the award of a certificate.

Evidence of the value and impact of these enabling strategies is presented and discussed in Chapter 6. Evidence is drawn from teacher leadership programmes initiated and supported by the authors in around 20 other countries in the UK,

Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. The analysis builds a persuasive case for the power of non-positional teacher leadership. In introducing our distinctive approach to evaluation, we begin with a critical exploration of dominant methods for determining the efficacy of a service or practice including the 'what works' paradigm (Pampaka, Williams & Homer, 2016) and evidence-based practice (Thomas & Pring, 2004). Such approaches are arguably flawed, not least because they are disempowering for teachers (Biesta, 2007). In our experience, teachers will be keen to seek out relevant research when they are actively engaged in the leadership of development work in their schools. When provided with appropriate support, they can apply high levels of scholarship in which they draw on evidence to inform their endeavours as agents of change (Frost et al., 2018). A framework of categories of impact derived from previous research informs the presentation of evidence of efficacy and value (Frost & Durrant, 2002). The range of evidence drawn upon includes rich narratives and testimony from teachers including those who have played facilitation roles. These narratives, shared verbally and through publication, have a key function in inspiring others. They invariably highlight a teacher's concern to address a matter which their moral purpose tells them is unjust.

In the final chapter, we consider the implications of the arguments we present throughout the book for policy and practice and put forward proposals for creating the conditions that would allow non-positional teacher leadership to thrive and grow. The question of social justice is foregrounded but the pragmatic considerations that both policy makers and practitioners routinely face are also considered. They are not framed as being antithetical, but we offer the means to integrate what might sometimes seem to be irreconcilable goals. We put forward recommendations and proposals that could transform the capacity to improve education for all by reshaping school leadership, enabling teachers to embrace the leadership of change as a defining element of their mode of professionality. These have implications for policy makers, school principals, district authorities, advisors, consultants, teachers/education practitioners, parents, researchers and donors who seek to lever change and improvement around the world.

We live in challenging times which demand bolder responses in public services of all kinds. In education this means reshaping leadership by empowering and enabling teachers, and other education practitioners, to extend their professionality and fully realise their potential as agents of change. We therefore present here a coherent framework of ideas which underpins our advocacy for a different way to configure educational leadership, such that the teacher is at the centre of improvement initiatives. The approach we are promoting rests on the proposition that within the teaching profession itself is the potential to provide the necessary support to enhance practitioners' moral purpose and mobilise their creativity, ingenuity and capacity for exercising leadership. This relies upon school principals using transformational leadership strategies through which they seek to cultivate professional cultures for change. To help with this they would initiate programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership as

detailed in the support materials linked to this book (www.routledge.com/9781041032717). Such programmes would operate within schools at times and places convenient to the participants and facilitated by experienced members of the school staff. Facilitators would convene groups that act as communities and use tools that scaffold participants' reflection, discussion and planning. This enables participants to design and lead projects focused on their own professional concerns but shaped through consultation with colleagues. Although projects would be informed by inquiry, at the centre of them would be the exercise of leadership aimed at maximising collaboration with colleagues. Through these collaborative and iterative change processes, new and improved practice can become embedded within the routines of the school. Facilitators would collaborate with their counterparts in other schools to arrange and host events at which teachers from several schools could engage in networking, building knowledge together through storytelling and robust critical friendship. We argue that this is a more productive way to pursue social justice in education and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UNDP, 2024).

2

BEING A TEACHER

Identity and professionality

As authors, we have all had the privilege of teaching in schools in the state system in England over many years. We found the experience sometimes challenging but ultimately fascinating and joyous. We are dismayed to hear about the shortage of teachers across the world (UNESCO, 2023a) and that many teachers, in England at least, are quitting after a year and even more after five years according to recent press reports (Fazakerley, 2024). The use of the word 'exodus' in Fazakerley's article seems justified if she is right in her estimation that the level of recruitment is not even sufficient to replace the teachers who are leaving. This is surely a crisis which calls for a radical rethink of policies that impact on teachers' wellbeing and commitment.

The question of teacher professional identity is crucial to renewal and improvement in education systems, as was highlighted in a recent OECD working paper (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). This has long been recognised and is particularly evident in Christopher Day's publications (Day et al., 2006; Day, 2017). His extensive body of work addresses the complex relationships between school leadership, school effectiveness and teachers' professional identity. Like Day, we are interested in the relationships between these phenomena which unfortunately are often discussed as separate topics. We are particularly interested in the possibility that the commitment to leading change could be part of teachers' professional identity.

In this chapter, we focus on teachers' professional identity and the factors that shape it. It is generally understood that teachers' knowledge, beliefs and levels of self-efficacy make a significant difference to the quality of their teaching (Day, 2017) but we are also exploring in this chapter their capacity to exercise leadership and act as agents of change committed to broader and long-lasting improvement. The OECD paper referred to above signals an important link between teacher identity and policy. It cites research which indicates that teachers' identities

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influence the way they respond to educational policies. When reforms clash with their values and beliefs, teachers might resist and obstruct them which led Suarez and McGrath to conclude that 'teachers should be seen as autonomous professionals and not as simple executors of imposed agendas' (2022: 7). We build on this important point before proceeding to a discussion of the debate about the regulation of the teaching profession. We go on to highlight the concept of professionality, as a more productive alternative to that of professionalism, which leads to focusing on pedagogy based on moral purpose and the pursuit of social justice.

Professional identity

Twenty years ago, academics in the Netherlands conducted a review of the research on teachers' professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). They noted that some studies focus on the characteristics or features of identity while others focus on the process of identity formation. One of the most fundamental points made in this review and elsewhere is that identity is not fixed but formed over time and in social contexts. More recently, Buchanan and Olsen (2018) talk of teaching as both a personal and a professional endeavour where balancing these is a fundamental part of the process of becoming a teacher. It is argued within the field of sociology that all human identities are social identities (Jenkins, 2008), on the grounds that identity is about meanings which are essentially negotiable, subject to reflection and review. Jenkins follows Erikson's view that identity is always a work in progress (1975). It is perhaps more helpful therefore to set aside the term 'identity' in favour of 'identification' which is a social process (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). This way of talking about it suggests not only that we are all in the process of becoming but also that the process of identification is affected by the person's environment or social context.

A useful set of categories for analysing teacher professional identity quoted in the OECD's working paper (Suarez & McGrath, 2022) included self-image, motivation, commitment, self-efficacy, task perception and job satisfaction. These are derived from a review of many research reports (Hanna et al., 2019). We are particularly interested in how these relate to modes of professionality which we discuss in more detail below.

Teachers at any stage of their careers are likely to struggle with their own process of self-identification because of the power of the social contexts in which they operate. At stake are levels of morale and commitment to teaching which have implications for recruitment and retention. Below, we discuss aspects of this social context including belonging to an institution or school, the influence of systems and society and belonging to the teaching profession.

Belonging to a school

A key dimension of the environment that shapes teachers' professional identities is the institutional one – the school or organisation to which the teacher

belongs. In much of the UK, the school is the teacher's employer, but in England it might be what is called a multi-academy trust (MAT). MATs are quasi-autonomous organisations that control a number of schools. In other countries, the employer may be the district authority or the state. This can be problematic as was evident in Kyrgyzstan, for example, where teachers, as servants of the state, were at one time required to clean the school and the street outside the school (Teleshaliyev, 2013). Nevertheless, the teacher is likely to experience a sense of belonging to a particular school and will experience being part of that organisation, a factor in creating the professional culture of a school and thereby aiding or curtailing its success.

The process of identification is strongly influenced by antecedent factors such as a person's values and their personality traits, as well as their experience of schooling as a child. These experiences could have been positively inspiring but equally might have featured interaction with negative role models; individuals who represent the kind of teacher we would not want to emulate (Al Khalidi et al., 2015). People carry these factors and experiences with them when they begin teacher preparation, variously known as initial teacher education or training. The nature of their preparation plays an important part in shaping teachers' professional identities, but evidently, entry to what is often referred to as 'the real world' of a school can be a shock (Flores & Day, 2006). There is no doubt that the school environment constitutes a powerful socialising force. This is in part a matter of the student teacher learning to practise in such a way that meets the expectations of those assigned to mentor them. It is also a matter of the nature of the organisational culture of the school, that is to say the dominant pattern of values, norms and routine practices that constitute 'the way we do things around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1983). This normative process shapes our beliefs and actions unconsciously (Layton, 2014; 2020).

Arguably, the school principal and the senior leadership team have a key role to play in shaping the professional or organisational culture of the school. Not all school principals are aware of the role they play in shaping the organisational culture of their institutions. However, they do this either deliberately through transformational leadership strategies (see Chapter 4) or unwittingly. For example, if a school principal were to agree to demands from individual heads of subject departments for more resources, it is likely to lead to what Andy Hargreaves termed a 'balkanized culture' (1992) rather than a collaborative one. This is an example of what we might call accidental culture building, which can be ameliorated when school principals act strategically to promote collegiality (Meyer et al., 2023). In some systems, there may be a considerable degree of what is often called 'churn', with the role of principal being occupied by a series of individuals. There are many possible reasons for rapid turnover. This may be because the school is particularly challenging or because of changes in political circumstances. In such situations, the development of the organisational culture is likely to lack coherence.

A key part of a school principal's strategic approach is the management of what in the UK is usually referred to as teachers' continuing professional

development (CPD). In some countries, principals have little influence over this but where the budget is in the hands of the school's leadership team, there is the potential to manage CPD strategically. The approach in many schools may be somewhat fragmented and incoherent, for example with individual teachers seeking opportunities for updating through short courses and asking the principal for permission to participate. However, some principals are aware that the provision of support for teachers' professional learning is a key plank of their culture-building strategy and recognise the possibility of influencing the way teachers construct their professional identities (Creaby, 2016). By influencing the nature of support and opportunities for professional learning, school principals can pursue their strategic goals, thus shaping the professional culture in the school which impacts on its effectiveness.

While it seems clear that the environment, in the form of the teaching profession and the school as an organisation, shapes a teacher's professional identity, it would be a mistake to see this as deterministic. Nor should we see it as merely overlaying an immutable original personal identity because, as already argued, identity formation is a process. Key to this process is what Giddens called 'reflexive identity' (Giddens, 1991). This can be explained by structuration theory which suggests that there is always a dynamic between social structures and human agency (Giddens, 1984). There are echoes of this in Freire's concept of *conscientização*, a Portuguese term which roughly translates as critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). This suggests that, in the process of identity formation, a teacher needs to engage in reflection and discussion through which their agency can be strengthened. Identification involves tension between the environmental factors that shape teacher identity and what teachers find important in both their professional and personal contexts (Tickle, 2000).

What teachers find important varies, of course, and each one of us has choices to make. There are undoubtedly some teachers who do not feel that they have choices. They may feel that the contours of their role and even the detail of their practice are prescribed by school managers or by the expectations of school inspectors. Prescriptive approaches may be helpful to novice teachers, and they may offer the potential for consistency, but the downside is the negative impact on a teacher's professionality when their creativity and scope for judgement are constrained. This is in sharp contrast to the facilitative approach which underpins non-positional teacher leadership.

The influence of systems and society

For many teachers, the socialising effect of the school as a unit is overlaid by the influence that is a consequence of the school's relationship to a system of one kind of another. In some countries such as the US, this may be the school district; in England, there is a complicated mix of local education authorities and multi-academy trusts (MATs). It is quite common for MATs to have 5–10 member schools but some include as many as 80 or 90 member

schools. In some countries the system may be more centralised. In Kazakhstan, where the authors have helped to launch teacher leadership programmes, schools are directly controlled by the Ministry of Science and Education which devolves some responsibilities to the regional *oblasts* and the more local *rayons* (OECD & World Bank, 2015). Whatever the case, any analysis of the influences on teachers' professional identities must take account of the role that these systems play in guiding and regulating their constituent schools.

Another dimension of the context of the identification process is the wider society. The common experience of attending school as children naturally shapes our expectations and assumptions of what a teacher is and should be. Representations of teaching and the role of the teacher tumble out of our radios, TVs and social media streams but the discussion of teaching and teachers in the media is heavily influenced by policy initiatives (Mockler, 2022a). Teachers' representatives take steps to bring discussions about the status of teachers to the fore. For example, Education International (EI), the global federation of teacher organisations, reports regularly on the matter (Thompson, 2021). Levels of pay and the quality of working conditions are always at the centre of such concerns, but the latest report from EI foregrounds the need to promote what is referred to in the report as 'intelligent professionalism', in which teachers' collective expertise and knowledge is recognised (Thompson, 2021). This is linked to the question of the status in which teachers are held in society.

Following research on the status of teachers at the University of Cambridge, Linda Hargreaves argues that teachers will feel more valued in society when they are trusted by school leaders, able to participate in continuing professional development programmes, provided with high-quality resources, involved in research and they 'become providers of continuing professional development for other teachers' (Hargreaves, 2009: 226, following Hoyle, 2001). This last item on Hargreaves's list is of particular interest to us because, as we discuss in some detail in Chapter 5, a key strategy for enabling non-positional teacher leadership is to recruit experienced teachers as facilitators of school-based support groups. The status of the teaching profession may also be affected by the fact that it is a female-dominated profession (Drudy, 2008; OECD, 2021). In spite of this, there is an under-distribution of women in leadership positions (ElAtia, Gomez & Corsi, 2022) and concerns have been expressed regarding the undervaluing of work traditionally associated with women (Kelleher et al., 2011). This is reinforced in a recent report from Education International (Arnold & Rahimi, 2025).

While there is no doubt that forces external to the school can have a powerful effect on how teachers see themselves, such influences can be mediated by the school as an institution. It has been argued that school principals and their senior teams typically engage in 'bridging and buffering' to mediate the effects of educational reform on their schools (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). In a similar vein, they can act strategically to ameliorate the negative effect of societal or policy-related messages that undermine teachers' self-belief. We suggest that even in centralised systems, school principals should be encouraged to adopt

transformational leadership strategies and engage proactively in building vibrant and positive professional cultures in which teachers feel empowered as agents of change. This is addressed more fully in Chapter 4.

Belonging to the teaching profession

To answer the question 'What do you do?' with the words 'I am a teacher' could be interpreted as meaning that the respondent regards themselves as a member of the teaching profession. However, it is not necessarily true that every teacher sees themselves as belonging to a profession; in any case, 'the teaching profession' could mean different things to different people. Some may see it as being a relatively local phenomenon, whereas others may see it as a wider international community. What does the term 'profession' imply? The list below is adapted from one created in 2012 by John MacBeath who had been commissioned by Education International to consider the future of the teaching profession (MacBeath, 2012).

1. Public service
2. Theoretical knowledge and related skills
3. Pre-service academic preparation and qualification
4. Legal recognition and exclusivity
5. A period of induction or probation
6. Membership of a professional association
7. Autonomy in matters of practice
8. A code of professional conduct or ethics
9. Regulation through professional bodies
10. Authority and legitimacy

Each of the above would need fuller explanation but perhaps they serve at least to establish a recognisable picture that would fit a range of professional contexts such as those within health care, social work, the law and so on.

The question of autonomy (number 7 in the above list) is crucial to our argument about non-positional teacher leadership. Research by the NFER (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020) and in Australia (Keddie et al., 2024) echoes earlier work (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005) which highlights how teacher autonomy increases teachers' wellbeing and levels of commitment, thereby impacting on recruitment and retention. The extent of autonomy in the teaching profession is context dependent; there are many different kinds of schools even within a given system and different norms within systems. Even in countries where teacher autonomy is said to be protected, teachers continue to lack control over factors such as school inspections, professional standards and performance appraisal. The increasing emphasis on accountability has impacted negatively on the status of the profession (Hargreaves & Flutter, 2019), undermining trust in teachers. This was brought into sharp focus during the Covid-19

pandemic when, in England and Wales, a faulty algorithm was used to determine examination results rather than to rely on teachers' predictions of students' grades. This led to national outrage (Baxter, 2020).

Some commentators have protested about the 'proletarianisation' of the teaching profession. In England and Wales, reforms culminating in the Education Reform Act 1988 introduced much-needed accountability measures that went a long way to ensuring that all children's entitlement to education was fulfilled. However, this inevitably reduced teachers' autonomy, especially regarding the curriculum (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). Some have argued that this lack of autonomy leads to teachers who are 'timid in their judgements, whose skills are reduced and whose perception in the community is that of technical worker' (Sachs, 2016: 417). The concept of teacher proletarianisation was discussed much earlier by a Swiss academic who referred to an OECD distinction between the 'minimum skills model' and an 'open professional model', both of which were evident in different OECD member countries (Perrenoud, 1996). In the 'open professional' model teachers have a central place in the process of improving the quality of education. They are regarded as 'innovating leaders, capable of self-improvement, analysing their own actions, identifying and reacting to pupils' needs and evaluating the results of their actions' (Perrenoud, 1996: 510). The open professional model resonates strongly with our own proposals about non-positional teacher leadership.

As Eric Hoyle pointed out, there are those who adopt a sceptical view of the professions, one that echoes more or less George Bernard Shaw's aphorism that a profession is 'a conspiracy against the laity', a point made in a previous era by Adam Smith, the 18th-century philosopher, who talked about a profession as 'a connivance to raise prices' (Hoyle, 2008). These views may seem quaint but a whole slew of government policies around the world seem to resonate with them, in that they have sought to change the balance between professional autonomy and policy leverage. Arguably, a key aspect of these policies is the demand for the specification of professional standards for teachers.

Professional standards and regulation

Regulation is invariably a feature of membership of a profession. Doctors, for example, can be struck off. Lawyers can be disbarred. The specification of professional standards is a key device that enables judgements to be made about the extent to which someone is acting in a professional manner and can demonstrate the dimensions of knowledge and competence deemed necessary for the job.

Historically, there has always been a debate about the focus of teachers' knowledge and competence. In the UK, the growth of mass schooling made a difference. In the 19th century families in the higher echelons of society would expect teachers to have a good degree from Oxford or Cambridge, but with the move to open up schooling to the mass of ordinary people, there came the pressure to create a much larger teaching workforce. One solution was the

pupil-teacher system brought in by the government in 1846 under which promising 13-year-old elementary pupils could be apprenticed as teachers (Robinson, 2006). A hundred years later, in the post-war period, teacher education was put in the hands of the universities. By this time, the debate was about three types of knowledge: knowledge of one or more school subjects, knowledge derived from relevant disciplines such as psychology and philosophy and the practical skills of teaching. In the 1960s, the Plowden Report called for all teachers to be qualified (Plowden, 1967) but it was not until 1970 that attaining Qualified Teacher Status became a requirement. A few years later, the British Prime Minister made a pivotal intervention in the form of the so-called Ruskin Speech.

> Parents, teachers, learned and professional bodies, representatives of higher education and both sides of industry, together with the government, all have an important part to play in formulating and expressing the purpose of education and the standards that we need.
>
> *(Callaghan, 1976)*

The Prime Minister's speech was a gentle exploration of the relationship between society and its education system, but it is often portrayed as a watershed moment, the beginning of an accountability juggernaut (Silverwood & Wolstencroft, 2023) which eventually led, in England, to the Education Reform Act of 1988.

The call for accountability had wide-ranging impact, leading to a national curriculum, a state-led assessment system, a school inspection system and much more. A key development for present purposes was a government initiative to create a set of standards for entry into the profession. Previous initiatives had led to more robust partnerships between teacher training colleges and schools to allow for a strengthening of the practical element. In 1984, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, a government agency, produced a set of standards against which student teachers would be assessed to achieve qualified teacher status (Barton, Pollard & Whitty, 1992). These standards, refined several times, became established as the basis for the appraisal of all teaching staff. The standards put forward by the Coates Report in 2011 have not changed much in the intervening 15-year period. The specifications listed seem uncontroversial – for example, 'Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils' or 'Plan and teach well-structured lessons' – but the issue concerns how such standards are used (Evers, 2018; Sachs, 2003a).

Criteria created to judge if someone is qualified to join the teaching profession later became standards used for the purposes of what in the UK we call 'staff appraisal'. Terminology used elsewhere for this includes teacher evaluation (Figazzolo, 2013) and the evaluation of teacher effectiveness (Murphy, 2013). The more general term 'performance management' is also used to refer to the process of monitoring and evaluation of teacher effectiveness (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). Legislation to ensure the provision

of teacher appraisal is common across OECD countries (OECD, 2023). The rationale for teacher evaluation or appraisal is contested. Amongst the key insights arising from school effectiveness research is that educational success cannot be explained just by looking at the characteristics of students – for example, their social background or level of innate intelligence (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2000). Over time, researchers' attention shifted to the 'teacher effect' and found that it outweighed the school effect (Luyten, 2003). These days there is a clear consensus that teachers make a difference (Hanushek, 2023). Given the key role that teacher effectiveness plays, it is perhaps unsurprising that we have seen the establishing of performance management policies. In England it was legislated for, and the Department for Education distributed a framework for schools. Currently this has the status of guidance. Performance management can be seen as part of the cultural trend that saw the global embrace of new public management thinking in the 1990s (Van Dooren & Hoffman, 2018).

Appraisal schemes usually include elements such as target setting, monitoring and review based on evidence. In the UK, the monitoring element through which evidence is generated has included classroom observation. According to the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2017), the use of student attainment data occurs in most of the countries which take part in the TALIS survey. In fact, the use of student learning outcomes is a requirement in Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Albania and Serbia (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021). The use of test scores became common in many countries, perhaps because of the perceived limitations of the observation of teaching (Tucker & Stronge, 2005) or because test scores are more easily quantified and compared (UNESCO, 2017).

There has always been an element of controversy around performance management and appraisal. Unions have taken a keen interest in the subject, which is why, in the UK, teachers' unions publish guidance and model school policies. It is also indicative that the matter is regularly discussed at the International Summits on the Teaching Profession at which Education International, colleagues at OECD and representatives of governments around the world gather annually (Bangs, 2013). The fundamental basis of the controversy arises because performance management is the means through which states hold teachers to account. Official documents tend to express the rationale in very positive terms; it is to enable teachers to improve their practice and develop their careers, for example. Issues arise because appraisal or teacher evaluation has at least four different functions which tend to be in tension with each other.

- It can be linked to performance-related pay.
- It is used to support promotion or career advancement.
- It provides evidence for renewal of certification or licence to teach.
- It can support professional development.

To simplify the analysis, we could say that the tension is between, on the one hand, the measurement of performance as a lever of compliance and, on the

other hand, teachers' professional development (Elliott, 2015). In her analysis of the dimensions of what she called the lop-sided shape of professionalism as influenced by performance management, Linda Evans identified three elements: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual (Evans, 2011). She noted that the systems established by government in 2010 in England placed too much emphasis on the behavioural, that which can be observed in the classroom. The dispositional and intellectual elements tend to be neglected by policies although it is possible to discern a more rounded professionalism in what is actually enacted by teachers. Almost inevitably, policy focuses on easy-to-measure features to enable broad comparisons across the system.

Specifications of professional standards are not in themselves problematic, but as Jelmer Evers at Education International says, it depends on how they are used (Evers, 2018). The Habermasian idea of lifeworld versus systemsworld can be applied in the analysis of schools' capacity for improvement.

> Accountability systems and structures … pull towards the reductionist, linear, quantifiable, resolvable epistemology of the systemsworld.
>
> *(Durrant, 2020: 50)*

Our concern with professional standards is that they can be used in crude and simplistic ways that diminish teachers' agency, undermine their confidence and disempower them. The alternative is to enable teachers to reflect on and develop their professional identities so that they become increasingly committed to strengthening their moral purpose and realising it in their practice.

Professionalism or professionality?

The public debate about professionalism features an assumption that we can define professional standards and then lay down a clear expectation that teachers must meet those standards. It is a commonplace compliment to say that the provider of a service, whether it be a waiter, a member of staff at a car dealership or an engineer sent by the gas company, acted very professionally. However, this standards-based way of thinking about professional practice is problematic. One of the milestones in our own work is the rehabilitation of the concept of 'professionality' introduced by Eric Hoyle in the 1970s but neglected thereafter (Evans, 2008). Professionality is about how you construct your professional identity and enact what flows from that. The term 'professionalism' is used more often, but problems with that concept signalled by Hoyle so long ago have been highlighted and amplified more recently. He highlighted the politicisation of the concept of professionalism especially in the era of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Hoyle suggested that the term 'professionality' is more helpful because it enables a focus on the way teachers construct their professional identities and how they enact them. This avoids focusing on matters such as gatekeeping, status, qualifications and vested interest

(Frost, 2018a). Hoyle subsequently observed that his suggestion about the concept of professionality was largely ignored (Hoyle, 2008) and professionalism remained the more commonly discussed concept.

In the 1990s, a number of authors in the UK and US offered their perspectives on professionalism. David Hargreaves for example offered a view of the 'new professionalism' that he suggested was emerging as a result of government reforms. He wanted to counter what he perceived to be a trend in commentary which talked of 'deprofessionalisation' and 'de-skilling' by describing what he perceived to be 'a growing synthesis between a more sophisticated conception of professional development and a strong commitment to institutional development' (Hargreaves, 1994: 424). He argued that reforms such as the introduction of a national curriculum were generating this synthesis. A key feature of his new professionalism reflected the decline of individualism in favour of whole school planning and collaboration. David Hargreaves welcomed the idea of paired classroom observation linked to staff appraisal schemes as a manifestation of this. Just a couple of years later, Ivor Goodson and Andy Hargreaves put forward their view of 'new professionalism' in which they foregrounded dimensions such as engagement with the moral and social purpose of teaching and collaborative cultures. Their specification also promoted the idea of self-directed professional learning as an antidote to 'compliance with the enervating obligations of *endless change* demanded by others' (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996: 21).

The term 'professionalism' continues to dominate public discourse and is often linked to the concept of professionalisation which tends to be seen by policy makers as a key lever for improvement in the education system. A recent working paper linked to a strand of work at OECD under the heading of 'New Professionalism and the Future of Teaching' suggested that some teachers engage in a professionalisation process to enhance their status and working conditions. However, it also highlighted evidence that

> the process of professionalisation has been used in a management or organisational sense, to influence the profession in ways professionals themselves may not align with.
>
> *(Mezza, 2022: 9)*

Again, in that paper we see very clearly the link between professionalism and professional standards and conduct. In our own work, we have sought to offer ways of thinking about teacher professional identity which are more aligned with the bottom-up intrinsic motivation we talked about in Chapter 1. The distinctive features of the concept of *professionality*, as an alternative to professionalism, offer a way forward (Frost, 2019).

Our interest in the concept of professionality came to the fore with the launch of the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative, introduced in Chapter 1. Launched in 2008, this project, using an action research-based design, involved university academics and a variety of other civil society

activists who acted both as researchers and facilitators. The project team included more than 50 members who supported around 1,000 teachers in 150 schools in 14 countries (Frost, 2011). At the outset, we faced a number of terminological challenges: one concerned the term 'teacher leadership' which our partners had always assumed reflects the common American practice of appointing a small number of individuals to formal teacher leadership roles; another was the term 'professionalism' which reflected the kind of problem flagged by Hoyle in the 1970s. The idea of professionalisation seemed to our colleagues to be disempowering, something inflicted on teachers by government agencies, whereas they were looking for an approach which would enable ordinary teachers to become agents of change. It was understood that this would challenge established hierarchies and lines of accountability. As a result of this, we adopted terms such as 'non-positional teacher leadership' and 'professionality' (Frost, 2011). The latter was liberating because it opened up the possibility that teachers could be self-directed agents with the confidence to construct their own professional identities.

The ITL initiative offered a framework of guidance and workshop tools designed to enable teachers to develop a mode of professionality that would be productive in two main dimensions. First, we believed that teachers would be able to develop their capacity for leading change which would lead to innovation and improved practice. Second, we hoped that the teachers who participated would experience a marked growth in their self-efficacy and self-confidence. The evidence presented in the ITL report indicated positive gains in both dimensions (Frost, 2011). The following vignette illustrates a common phenomenon. In this case the context was Kosovo where schools had struggled to be inclusive of ethnic minorities. Zana was a teacher who had joined a support group to enable her to lead change with regards to the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the life of the school.

> Zana was concerned with low enrolment of ethnic minority students, their early drop-out and a low level of parent involvement. She invited colleagues to meet to discuss how to address the problem. They realised that parents from the minority community may not be well educated but they are good at playing various instruments, so they decided to establish the 'Music Lab'. They invited the teacher of music and parents from the community and made the plan together. The floor of the room was remade to make it appropriate for dancing. Musical instruments and traditional outfits from both communities [ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs] were bought. They made a schedule for rehearsals where parents would come and help the teacher of music. They decided who would play instruments and who would help with dancing lessons. In cooperation with the principal, they organised an event where students, with the help of teachers and parents, sang, danced and played instruments. Through this event they were able to distribute information about the Music Lab to parents, teachers, education department officials and teachers from other schools. (Vignette from a teacher leadership group in Kosovo)
>
> *(Frost, 2011: 35)*

Here we see a teacher who was keenly aware of a social justice issue. She cared deeply about the exclusion of ethnic minority families and chose to talk to colleagues about her concern and collaborate with them to develop a practice that would make a difference. Evidently, Zana had benefited from the scaffolding of the ITL framework and developed her capacity for leadership. What came through from the research teams' reports in the 14 participating countries was that teachers' development work, their professional learning and the development of their professionality were indivisible, as this extract from one of the reports illustrates.

> The teachers' projects made a difference not just to classroom practice, but more widely. It made a difference to their colleagues' capacity – their teaching, their understanding, their dispositions and their work motivation, in spite of teacher low status and salaries in our country. (Final Report, July 2011, Moldova)
>
> *(Frost, 2011: 32)*

Our collective reflection at the conclusion of the ITL project highlighted how extended professionality was an outcome of enabling teachers to lead development work in pursuit of social justice. The evidence showed that they had become more likely to 'share responsibility for the goals of the learning community to which they belong, engage in knowledge creation and transfer and act ethically in pursuit of the interests of their students' (Frost, 2011: 42).

Since the publication of the ITL report, the specification of extended professionality was developed and refined, especially in the context of the HertsCam Network (Frost, 2017; 2019), a charity which has supported teacher leadership programmes in the UK and abroad. Although our conceptualisation of extended professionality began with Hoyle, it has been informed by Judith Sachs's call for 'activist professionalism' (Sachs, 2003b) and by the wider discourse about teacher leadership. The latest iteration of extended professionality is characterised as one in which teachers see themselves as agential innovators, driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and commitment to social justice. They act according to clear pedagogical principles but with a pragmatic grasp of how to navigate the system in which they teach. These teachers strive continuously to develop their practice, improve the quality of students' learning and create professional knowledge. They do so by exercising leadership, informed by inquiry, in order to influence their colleagues and embed new and improved practice in the routines of the school (Frost, 2019). This conceptualisation stands in sharp contrast to one which depends on professional standards drawn up and validated by central government authorities who seek to exercise leverage in the hope of achieving compliance with their reforms.

Pedagogy and professionality

The role of the teacher is complex, as indicated in this chapter so far, but at the centre of teachers' professional identity is their practice in classrooms and their relationships with successive cohorts of students. Those who suffer from the stress of a changing policy environment, the climate of performative accountability or the challenge of working in an institution may plead to be just left alone to teach. Teachers we have encountered in post-Soviet countries, for example, have said that private tutoring provides them with a space to express their professionalism:

> In the age of the 'outcome-based accountability' reforms that have swept the former socialist bloc (Steiner-Khamsi, Silova and Johnson, 2006), teachers may seek to offer private tutoring because it provides an opportunity to increase their professionalism through creativity while avoiding the rigidity of state control.
>
> *(Silova, 2009a: 41)*

This is interesting but in this book we are more interested in mainstream systems of public schooling and how teachers in such schools can develop modes of professionality which allow them to live out their professional values. Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child mandate that every child has a right to a quality education (UNICEF, 2024) which is encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNDP, 2024). Governments have an obligation to ensure this provision but, as repeatedly emphasised in academic literature and expert reports, the key to this is the teacher. Therefore, questions about the competency of teachers to provide quality education cannot be separated from consideration of how teachers construct their professional identities.

Where there is a global shortage of qualified, competent and effective teachers, some attempts to address this have negative consequences for teachers' professionality. One such strategy is the scripted approach to teaching. This was a feature of the well-documented 'Success for All' programme in the US (Slavin & Madden, 2001). It was also used on a much larger scale by Bridge academies as the means to provide education to millions of children in Africa and India on a profit-making basis. Bridge International Academies is a private company which provides schooling for children from poor families in India, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda (Stewart, 2015) for as little as 6–8 dollars a month. The detailed lessons plans are written in the US and the teachers, who are mostly school leavers, are trained just enough to follow the instructions they are given (Riep & Machacek, 2016). Such practices are subject to considerable critique not just because of the profit-making element but also because they undermine the very idea of the teacher as a qualified and agential professional.

The stark example outlined above rests on the assumption that teaching involves a set of skills which can be defined by experts and used to frame a programme of basic training, but as Palmer J. Parker memorably said: 'good

teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher' (1997: 16). The key to the mode of professionality that we argue for in this book is the concept of pedagogy which is far more than a set of skills for classroom practice. A helpful definition was set out in a document, 'Professionalism and Pedagogy', which arose from a collaboration between the GTCE (General Teaching Council for England) and the TLRP (Teaching and Learning Research Programme).

> Pedagogy is the practice of teaching framed and informed by a shared and structured body of knowledge. This knowledge comprises experience, evidence, understanding, moral purpose and shared transparent values. It is by virtue of progressively acquiring such knowledge and mastering the expertise – through initial training, continuing development, reflection and classroom inquiry and regulated practice – that teachers are entitled to be treated as professionals.
>
> *(GTCE, 2010)*

It is notable that central to the concept as explained above is knowledge and moral purpose and so, as teachers, our pedagogy is the basis of our claim to be professionals.

In our world currently dominated by the principles of scientific management promulgated by Frederick Winslow Taylor at the beginning of the twentieth century (Au, 2011), it may seem fanciful to express the hope for a pedagogy that liberates learning (Rincón-Gallardo, 2019). Schools are increasingly geared towards preparing for tests and examinations. Pedagogical discussion seems so often to focus on matters such as managing student behaviour, motivating students and maximising student engagement, all of which reveals just how removed schooling can be from the exhilaration and flow of authentic learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Santiago Rincón-Gallardo promotes the idea of liberating learning and the view that 'good pedagogy is about establishing relationships of dialogue and mutual learning between students and teachers in the presence of knowledge' (2019: 11). Perhaps not everyone would subscribe to Rincón-Gallardo's formulation, but teachers who have extended their professionality will seek out opportunities to reflect on their pedagogical values and beliefs and will be open to dialogue with colleagues about them.

Teachers who develop a strong sense of moral purpose and positive self-efficacy beliefs not only make a significant contribution to improvements in educational practice and the creation of professional knowledge, but they also strengthen their commitment to the profession of teaching. As noted in a recent statement from the UNESCO Teacher Task Force 2030, this addresses the staff retention issue (UNESCO, 2024a). It also makes it more likely that such teachers will be enthusiastic advocates for teaching as a career choice and for a mode of professionality in which teachers are not only excellent and committed practitioners, but also agents of change.

Conclusion

We are interested in the pursuit of social justice in education and believe that the key to this is to empower and enable teachers as agents of change. This enterprise has to be based on a critical understanding of how teachers think about their professional identities and the factors that influence this. We have argued that identification is a social process and, as such, is amenable to change. This can only be achieved through a process of cultivation, not dictation. We know that teachers often struggle with their professional identity in the sense that their values and beliefs might be in tension with the messages, both overt and subliminal, emanating from the policy environment, the way their schools operate, the systems within which they operate and the wider society. We have explored the connection between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, their agency and capacity to lead change and have noted along the way that identification is a reflexive activity which is nurtured by engaging in reflection and discussion.

We have examined what it is to be a professional and have offered a critical view of the growing tendency for governments to instigate systems of professional standards as levers for professionalisation and compliance. We have argued instead for the alternative concept of professionality which is more productive because it is about how you construct your professional identity and enact what flows from that. We argue that school principals can make a difference to the way teachers construct and enact their professionality by using transformational leadership strategies in their schools. These have the potential to enable non-positional teacher leadership to flourish which in turn makes it more likely that teachers will embrace a vibrant pedagogy that will liberate learning.

3

CHANGE IN EDUCATION

The teacher's role

What does change mean? 'Life is flux', said Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher in the sixth century BC. The much-repeated statement 'We can never step into the same river twice' has also been attributed to him. Change is simply a feature of life whether it be mundane, joyous or threatening. In Octavia Butler's novel, *Parable of the Sower*, a character says: 'All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change.' This is a good reminder that we cannot avoid change in our wider environment or in our professional context. However, there are at least two ways in which we can exercise some control: one is our response to change and our ability to make the necessary adjustments; another is our capacity to initiate change.

In advancing arguments for teacher-led change, we needed to recognise that there is already an established discourse about educational change and a policy landscape which rests on that discourse. In order to understand why, and how, we can empower and enable teachers as agents of change, we explore below how change is commonly understood and offer a critique of the dominant features of the way it usually works.

Framing our discussion about change

Our discussion about educational change is framed by our understanding of the links between human agency, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the levels of morale within the teaching profession. This could be summarised by saying that authentic change is more likely to occur if teachers are empowered and enabled to change practice. This is antithetical to reform mandated from above. Teachers' ability to develop practice and their commitment to do so depends on their level of self-belief and morale. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated a long-term problem associated with the policy environment that leads to

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demoralisation. This was powerfully addressed recently in Anne Helen Peterson's Culture Study post.

> Demoralization occurs when teachers cannot reap the moral rewards that they previously were able to access in their work. It happens when teachers are consistently thwarted in their ability to enact the values that brought them to the profession.
>
> *(Peterson, 2021)*

Peterson cites research by Doris Santoro about the reasons for teachers leaving the profession in spite of a deep commitment to the work (Santoro, 2018). She also presents first-hand accounts from teachers, in which they often explain why they had felt forced to leave the profession. Issues concerning salary and workload feature quite strongly, but the over-arching concern was with the devastating effect of being undervalued and not having the freedom to act according to their professional values and pedagogical principles. In subsequent chapters we show how it is possible to tap into teachers' moral purpose and agency, mobilising these powerful forces to address matters of social justice as they arise in schools. As we demonstrate below, when teachers are able to act on their principles, the experience is transformative for them and for those around them.

The question of social justice is a key element of the lens through which we look at change in education. As Rincón-Gallardo (2019) has pointed out, issues of power and liberation tend to be ignored in the discourse on educational change and the question of the school context is similarly neglected. For purposes of illustration, the example of post-Covid pupil absenteeism is perhaps helpful. There has been alarm widely expressed at the numbers of children who are persistently absent following a period of school closures. In some families, the focus on education was maintained even when schools were closed, whereas some children were relying on the school to maintain that momentum. Statistics about non-attendance fuelled the usual debates about how best to achieve compliance regarding the requirement to attend. As previously, this tends to be about the balance between incentives and sanctions, the so-called carrot and stick approach, but some commentators have suggested that school closures simply broke the habit of going to school (Christodoulou, 2023). In keeping with Rincón-Gallardo's observation, the question of social justice is neglected even when the disparity in the experiences of different social groups is surfaced. In some homes children had access to good quality laptop computers, the benefit of supportive parents who could work from home, as well as help in adjusting to both school lockdowns and the return to school. In contrast, some children's education was simply suspended when schools locked down. Many parents could not work at home, so their children were often left unsupervised and without guidance or structure. Online learning for many such children was often impossible or accessed with difficulty on a borrowed smart phone which

had to be shared between many. Inevitably, there has been significant variation in the quality of support for families from the school. This is a matter of social justice because of the inequity of provision which had different consequences for different social groups.

We now offer an analysis of how change works. We discuss change at the global and national levels and explore how policies are mediated and interpreted by schools and the middle tier organisations that govern them. We put forward a critical analysis of so-called top-down change and present our case for teacher-led change as a means to ameliorate the potential for the negative impact of such policies.

Global level change

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was agreed at the third meeting of the United Nations in Paris in 1948 included the right for everyone to education (UNICEF, 2024). This has been ratified and amplified in a whole series of treaties and conventions and in statements of goals since that time. However, when we look at the global provision of education in 2024, the picture is bleak. The UN agreed a set of development goals in 2000, which subsequently became the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2014, Sustainable Development Goal 4 was: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all (UNDP, 2024). Progress towards these goals has been monitored since then and reports indicate that there has been some progress with the achievement of a 91% rate of enrolment in primary schools in developing countries. However, according to the UN Development Programme website there are still 57 million children who have no access to schooling and 103 million young people who lack basic literacy (UNDP, 2024). This bleak picture reminds us that there is still a crisis in education and a desperate need for change which concerns both the provision of schooling and the quality of that provision. There is also a huge disparity in educational provision across the world, with children in the global north attending school for around 12 years but in some poorer countries it may be only three years. The poverty factor, together with cultural differences and political priorities, means that the experience of education in different parts of the world is extremely variable. However, education is not immune to the general trend towards globalisation; pedagogical beliefs and practices, and policy ideas, are increasingly mobile. How these travel around the world is part of the context of change in education.

Researchers and other commentators have drawn attention to the hazards of 'transnational policy borrowing' where it is assumed that a practice deemed to be successful in a developed country can be implemented to good effect in a country where the practice is unfamiliar (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2016). This can be problematic because of the different characteristics of the site of implementation, whether this is a matter of the

organisational infrastructure, the level of resources, the culture or the history of practice in the host country. Another problem is the assumption that an established practice in a developed country such as the UK is educationally sound. As the standardisation discourse gathers strength around the world, effective learning is seen as synonymous with success in tests produced by big commercial enterprises such as Pearson and Cambridge International Education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Just because a given practice is associated with a high level of attainment based on summative tests does not necessarily mean that it is educationally worthwhile.

The inexorable march of the global education reform movement (GERM) is considered by many to have undermined the quality of education (Sahlberg, 2011, 2022; Hargreaves et al., 2001; Fuller & Stevenson, 2018). Sahlberg describes GERM under five headings: standardisation, focus on core subjects, narrow focus on test preparation, corporate management models and text-based accountability (2011). This neo-liberal approach to reform has been dominant in the UK and the US for some time, but latterly it is also infecting the developing world through the influence of organisations such as OECD and the World Bank (Seitzer, 2021; Edwards et al., 2024). Exercises such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) encourage governments to compete for recognition on the international scene. Perhaps this is merely a matter of national pride, but there are also serious consequences of a country's position in this league table for their economic success and capacity for influence on the international stage. A useful illustrative example is Kazakhstan, one of the countries that achieved independence when the Soviet Union collapsed. The government led by President Nazarbayev pursued a policy of internationalisation that was explicitly linked to an aspiration to achieve economic advantage through modernisation. Central to this was the belief that economic success depends on the importing of ideas about technology, science and education from developed countries (Yakavets & Dzhadrina, 2014). One manifestation of this policy was the founding of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, a network of elite schools in which it was obligatory to hire a fixed proportion of teachers from around the world with preferential salaries and other attractive conditions. This is perhaps a stark example of how a government's aspirations regarding their position in relation to other countries can translate into a desire to import educational ideas from elsewhere.

The direction of change has also been influenced by the rise of international private schooling. According to the giant finance company Morgan Stanley, the global education market is soon likely to be worth around $8 trillion (Morgan Stanley, 2023). Private schools are prevalent all over the world, many of them being local, low-fee operations, but in many countries, education is provided by institutions that are franchised by well-established independent schools based in Europe and the US. For example, Dulwich College, founded in London in 1619, launched a franchise in Shanghai in 2003 and since then many others have followed suit. There are also examples of French schools in Cairo, German

schools in Istanbul and American schools in Dubai. These schools tend to cater to elites and charge substantial fees and, while they may be obliged to respect the requirements of host countries in order to be licenced, they nevertheless bring the curricular and pedagogical practices of their countries of origin. Because of their status, they provide a model for school provision which influences reform at the local level (Ashley et al., 2014).

Educational ideas also travel through sponsorship and philanthropy led by organisations such as the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF, USAID and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Donors characteristically focus on the so-called global south – Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and South America – and inevitably enable the spread of beliefs and assumptions that underpin established practices in the global north.

Looking at the global picture highlights the social justice question, and teachers reading this account may feel powerless. It seems that the values and beliefs prevalent in the global north are increasingly influential everywhere in spite of the cultural differences and sharp disparities in levels of poverty. The implications for teachers and their role in relation to change include threats to professional autonomy and voice. They also include opportunities for teachers to rise to the challenge and become leaders of change even though their zones of influence may seem limited. Globalisation in this digital age also enables teachers to learn from one another across international boundaries and to inspire each other to pursue the goal of justice in education.

National level change

At the national level, policy makers initiate change for a variety of reasons. They may be responding to the findings of research or school inspectors' reports which suggest some kind of quality concerns or omission in provision. In the UK, there is evidence of regional differences in educational attainment (Winchester, 2022; Staton, 2022). Governments may choose to address such inequities. It may be that there are discernible changes in society and the economy which young people need to be prepared for, hence the current discussion about education for sustainability (UNESCO, 2023b). Policy makers may be prompted to act because employers have identified shortcomings in the knowledge, skills and aptitudes of the young people who are presenting themselves for employment. Pressure may also be felt when universities report on recurring weaknesses in the students who are applying for degree courses. In addition, governments seek to achieve competitive advantage, militarily and economically, and are aware of the role of education in the growth of innovation and capability. In the present era, we are accustomed to hearing about countries' responses to what is revealed by international surveys such as PISA (Santos & Centeno, 2023).

Such responses are not always as rational as they may sound because, inevitably, they are mediated by politics. This was explored by Peter Dow in which he reflected on the introduction and subsequent abandonment of an ambitious

social studies curriculum in the US in the 1960s. The initiative had been prompted by the panic arising from the news that the Soviet Union had been able to launch the first manned space flight – the Sputnik – indicating that America was falling behind not only in the space race but perhaps in wider educational terms (Dow, 1991).

Governments persist in a range of familiar strategies to pursue their policy objectives in relation to educational reform. For example, they may commission the production of well-designed guidelines or arrange training sessions at which experts will use polished presentations to try to clarify what is expected of teachers. However, the key question is one which was posed many years ago by Susan Rosenholtz, an academic in the US, in relation to educational reforms: 'Will they increase teacher commitment?' (Rosenholtz, 1987). Policy makers consistently underestimate the importance of teacher commitment not only to the enterprise of change but also to the likelihood of them remaining in the profession. Over the decades since this question was posed, we see little evidence of government-led reforms being accompanied by implementation strategies that can mobilise teachers' moral purpose and maximise their commitment to change and improvement.

Problems with top-down reforms

Educational reforms often begin with a pilot project which can then be 'rolled out' or 'scaled up'. Such terms conjure up scenarios in which the creativity and agency of individual practitioners are threatened. The term 'scaling up' is commonly used to refer to the challenge of spreading an innovation to the whole national system or at least a much wider range of sites. The idea of scaling up is discussed in relation to business, health provision, international development and, more recently, educational reform. A familiar saying – 'great oaks from little acorns grow' – is represented pictorially on the cover of a seminal guide to scaling up for practitioners (Cooley, Kohl & Ved, 2006), now in its third edition. Researchers are often exhorted to consider the impact of their endeavours and how innovative practice might be scaled up. This may strike academics as an unreasonable expectation; after all, their expertise is research rather than the leadership of development and, generally speaking, they lack the means to effect change (Sabelli & Harris, 2015).

In recent years the assumption about what we might call the scaling-up imperative has gathered momentum (Augenstein et al., 2020). We live in an era in which companies such as Amazon or Uber have grown rapidly from start-up to mass market, so perhaps it is unsurprising that the logics of tech-based businesses have migrated to the world of social enterprise.

> Even 'social innovation' debates, usually concerned more with bottom-up dynamics and local alternatives than with megalomaniac technocratic interventions, are increasingly pushing for up-scaling.
>
> *(Pfotenhauer et al., 2022: 4)*

With regard to education, scaling up is particularly problematic. In the pilot stage of an initiative, teachers may become fully engaged and committed. It is likely that they are involved because of a match between their own beliefs and values and those underpinning the particular initiative, but in going to scale, this advantage may not be present. Some experts in the field of public policy have questioned traditional scaling paradigms. For example, leading policy expert Sandra Naranjo Bautista suggests that scaling is not always possible or desirable and that modifying rather than multiplying may be a better goal (Naranjo Bautista, 2019). If the attempt to scale up in education leads to the imposition of reforms on teachers, there can be various negative effects.

One negative effect of imposition from the top is that fidelity may be compromised. The term 'fidelity' usually refers to the extent to which practices resulting from a reform initiative match the intentions of those who designed the innovation (Century, Rudnick & Freeman, 2010; O'Donnell, 2008). Teachers will naturally interpret reforms in the light of their already established pedagogical beliefs and practices which may be seen as a problem, but it can also be viewed as desirable (Datnow, 2020). This echoes Richard Elmore's point that large-scale reforms tend not to affect core practice, which he defined as

> how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student's role in learning, and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and classwork.
>
> *(Elmore, 1996: 2)*

Elmore also argued that reform strategies invariably lack an intelligent theory of change. The use of the term 'implement' indicates the limitations in thinking about the change process or, in other words, how teachers learn to act differently. Discussions about scaling up invariably use the term 'implementation' which implies that once policy makers have decided that a given practice should become the norm, the rest is unproblematic (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Cerna, 2013). This reflects Elmore's statement quoted above and constitutes a failure to recognise that change involves learning on the part of practitioners and those whose job it is to support them. As Fullan and Miles pointed out many years ago, 'all change involves coming to understand and to be good at something new' (1992: 749). The concept of learning is key to understanding the process of change, and we know from experience in school that, if we rely on transmissive training models that lack scope for agency, teachers' learning will be neither authentic nor transformational. With young people we may be able to create the appearance of learning by preparing students for the test, but in the context of educational reform we are dealing with adult professionals, the teachers. The key characteristic in the case of adult professionals is that it is imperative that they are able to make judgements and decisions in the flow of action in complex social situations.

> All teachers deserve to have collaboration experiences that are fulfilling and make good use of their precious time. Leaders play an important role in teacher empowerment and learning within the context of collaboration (Datnow & Park, 2019). We often see the opposite in underperforming schools, where teachers can feel demoralized as they struggle to learn in the context of multiple top-down, often conflicting, initiatives, a parade of coaches who are dispatched to their schools, and narrow measures of accountability.
>
> *(Datnow, 2020: 438)*

When implementation stalls, it is not uncommon to blame teachers. Resistance to change features in both policy and academic discourse (Oreg, 2018; Murphy, 2016) but, as we discuss below, so-called 'teacher resistance' may be explained, not by complaints about change itself but about change that has been mandated from sources external to the school, typically, the government. Authentic change that goes beyond superficial and tokenistic compliance requires teacher commitment and the mobilisation of their moral purpose, agency and critical faculties. There is the potential to address this through the leadership provided within schools and the organisations that support them. Arguably, one of the important functions of leadership is mediation which can provide a degree of protection through processes of interpretation and priority setting.

Policy mediation in the 'middle tier'

Top-down policies are inevitably mediated by what is sometimes termed the 'middle tier' or 'intermediate organisations'. In England, the picture is rather complicated, with a variety of institutions and organisations constituting the 'middle tier' (Greany & Higham, 2018; Greany, 2022). In the US, schools have traditionally belonged to a 'district', each with a superintendent, but, since the 1990s, there has been a growth in the prevalence of 'charter schools'. These have been founded with the permission of state authorities and they are not controlled by a district. A proportion of these belong to a management organisation which could be construed as an alternative middle tier. In England, the equivalent to the American charter schools are 'free schools' which are founded with the blessing of the national government and largely independent of the traditional local education authorities. Free schools are a variation of what the government calls 'academies' which are often clustered together in multi-academy trusts (MATs) containing between 5 and 90 schools. Local education authorities retain responsibility for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and for safeguarding children. The push for MATs reflects one of the dimensions of the global education reform movement which is the increasing adoption of corporate management models (Sahlberg, 2012). In England, the political push towards what is referred to as 'academisation' is clearly driven by beliefs in the power of the market and the value of corporate forms of

organisation. Sahlberg has argued that policies such as these are undermining the quality of education.

A paper published by the Confederation of School Trusts in the UK offers a more positive picture. It argues that school trusts act as 'anchor institutions'.

> Anchor institutions, alongside their main purpose, play a significant role in a locality by making a strategic contribution to the greater social good and prioritise support for those experiencing disadvantage.
>
> *(Townsend, Vainker & Cruddas, 2022: 4)*

Their paper suggests that anchor institutions are focused on 'civic leadership' responsive to their communities and are able to provide support for disadvantaged families. There is some resonance here with what has been observed in school districts in Ontario. Andy Hargreaves's book about developments there included a discussion about the distinction between 'leading *in* the middle' and 'leading *from* the middle'. Leading in the middle is seen as a strategy for implementing national reforms and tends to focus on the bottom line of increasing achievement scores that align with top-down priorities. Leading from the middle, in contrast, is 'inclusive and empowering', more about mobilising a variety of local stakeholders. He says that 'It is about local, collective authority, expertise, and confidence to develop new strategies …' (Hargreaves, 2024: 73).

MATs may be able to offer civic leadership, especially when they are clustered in a particular location, although this may be open to question when they are very large with schools scattered across many different communities. The larger organisations, whether they be MATs or local education authorities, have many advantages including the central provision of 'back-office support' and economical procurement strategies, which is why the idea of multi-school organisations is currently under discussion in Australia (Hunter, Haywood & Parkinson, 2024). The large scale can also allow for the central provision of specialist expertise which can be shared across the schools (Ofsted, 2019). This helps to overcome barriers to inter-school collaboration. Leadership support and specialist knowledge can be quickly deployed if one of the constituent schools falls into difficulty. Claims made about the advantages of MATs are disputed by the National Education Union (2019). In relation to teacher-led change, we are concerned about the extent to which teachers in schools that belong to large intermediate organisations are empowered to lead not only the direction of their own professional learning but also processes of practice development. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases the priorities for teachers' professional development are determined centrally, which can inhibit teacher-led change. This is not always the case, however, and some school principals report that belonging to a MAT provides welcome support without limiting their autonomy. If, as we argue, the role of the teacher is crucial to the process of reform, it is essential that the aspiration to achieve coherence across schools in multi-school organisations does not prohibit teacher empowerment.

The challenge for school principals

At the school level, an important stimulus for change is principals' awareness of the variability in attainment between different age groups and subject areas (Hutchinson, Reader & Akhal, 2020) and it is incumbent upon them and their senior leadership teams to devise strategies to address such anomalies. Such strategies can be difficult to manage and good principals know that their success depends on securing colleagues' trust and cooperation.

Because of the trend towards the collection and publication of data from standardised tests, school principals are aware of how the level of academic performance in their school compares with that of others. In the sphere of private schooling, institutions have always been in competition with each other and their track record in exam results plays an important part in their ability to attract students. In some state education systems, schools have been forced to compete with each other through policies that lead to the publication of test data and inspection reports (Gibbons, Machin & Silva, 2008) and this is sometimes highlighted in ways which are uncomfortable or even threatening. In England, for example, it is not uncommon for the outcomes of a school inspection to lead to a re-organisation of schooling in the locality or the dismissal of the school principal (Freedman, 2023).

It is perhaps an unintended consequence of policy that the capacity for sustainable change can be limited by the very measures designed to address the persistent difficulties experienced by some schools. Andy Hargreaves referred to what he discerned as a system of apartheid in which schools in one category are 'performance training sects' and in the other are 'professional learning communities' (Hargreaves, 2002). It has certainly been our experience in England that some schools in disadvantaged communities have found themselves labelled as unsuccessful because of test results that fall below the national average. They are consequently subject to more rigorous levels of scrutiny than schools which have more positive inspection reports. The higher level of scrutiny has the effect of narrowing the focus for development within such a school, which in turn restricts the possibility of long-term capacity building strategies in favour of short-term 'quick fix' tactics (Hargreaves, 2002).

The kind of market-led impetus for change referred to above does not apply everywhere in the world of course. In any case, whether or not the school principal and senior leaders are under that kind of pressure, they will naturally want to improve the effectiveness of their schools as a matter of moral purpose (Fullan, 2003). Some may be tempted to narrow their focus on measures of academic attainment, but enlightened leaders will adopt a more sophisticated view of the aims of education which might encompass such dimensions as the capacity for lifelong learning, personal fulfilment, wellbeing and preparation for citizenship.

As we discuss in Chapter 4, the job of senior leaders has two complementary dimensions: one is concerned with strategy; and the other, capacity building. The strategic dimension is about planning and leading initiatives to address

specific issues such as the need for better provision for students with special educational needs. The second dimension, capacity building, is about creating the conditions for change. This entails strategic work to build relationships, create the right structures and cultivate a change-oriented culture (Stoll, 2009). The extent to which strategy and capacity building are in harmony with each other has significant implications for teachers. If senior leaders adopt a relentless and determined approach to strategy, as they may feel forced to do if their school is under pressure to improve, they are likely to neglect capacity building. A focus on capacity building may mean that senior leaders have to create space for debate and dissent in order to engage teachers collaboratively in a process of co-design or co-construction. This may seem to threaten the coherence or intensity of particular strategic initiatives, but the long-term pay-off may well be worth it (Gray et al., 1999; Stoll, 2009). The term capacity building is open to different interpretations and is not without its detractors. It has been argued, for example, that capacity building measures are typically imposed from above (Littles, 2022) but this seems to reflect a misuse of the term on the part of authorities that impose restructuring.

Teacher-led change

At the classroom level, good teachers have a strong sense of moral purpose and are aware that enabling every child to realise their full potential requires a constant experimental or inquiry mindset to try to discover how to achieve this. This is partly about the desire simply to become more effective, but also a response to the continuous flux of the classroom. There are so many variables. Chief amongst them is the composition of the class on any given day. Which of the students are absent? Which have come to school without having had breakfast? Which have experienced a crisis within the family? In some parts of the world, students may also have experienced challenges with regard to their security because of inter-ethnic conflict. This was reported to us when we supported teacher leadership programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Palestine.

The social dynamic of the classroom requires the teacher to be aware, and able to make adjustments, in order to accommodate students' dispositions and behaviours. In addition, good teachers will be constantly monitoring students' learning as it is happening in front of them and making the necessary adjustments. So-called 'adaptive teaching' builds on the idea of differentiation and is crucially linked to formative assessment (Woffindin, 2023). The point is that change is simply part of everyday classroom experience, even though teachers might not necessarily think of it as such.

Change may well be a natural feature of life, but we still hear about change fatigue as mentioned above. This was expressed by Shannon Hazel, an experienced teacher in the US who talks about teacher burn-out. She focused on the exhaustion that can arise when changes are frequent, but she also notes that teachers are often not consulted about changes that are handed down from

above (Hazel, 2024). The idea of 'change fatigue' is often put forward as an explanation for practitioners' resistance to change. This is discussed quite frequently in the context of nursing practice (Kapping, 2021; McMillan & Perron, 2013) and in organisational studies (Bernerth, Walker & Harris, 2011; de Vries & de Vries, 2021). In education, there are some studies of change fatigue such as one which examined issues arising from the implementation of a new curriculum in Australia (Dilkes, Cunningham & Gray, 2014); another looked at variable levels of change fatigue in different demographic categories in Turkish schools (Limon & Sezgin-Nartgün, 2020). In addition, we know from personal experience that teachers sometimes express the view that constant change is problematic. However, when teachers make comments such as these, they are usually expressing their sense of frustration with the constant flow of reforms imposed from above rather than with change per se.

Why is change of the kind mentioned above such a problem? An explanation can perhaps be found in structuration theory, in which human agency is said to be in dynamic relation to social structures (Giddens, 1984; Durrant, 2020). Giddens rejected the tenets of determinism and instead argued that social structures are recreated in the specific moment of action. This means that, although our behaviours and thinking are shaped by social structures, we can nevertheless choose not to recreate them and instead try to establish quite different norms. The term 'agency' has become a common feature of current affairs discussion in the broadcast media and consequently its meaning has become somewhat loose. Giddens's sociological theory has underpinned our understanding of human agency which is also informed by Bandura's work in the field of psychology.

> Self-generated influences operate deterministically on behavior (in) the same way as external sources of influence do. … (so) some measure of self-directedness and freedom is possible.
>
> *(Bandura, 1989: 1182)*

Bandura's explanation also includes insight concerning the link between agency, self-efficacy and morale. His social cognitive theory indicates that the frustration of agency can lead to depression and he has provided evidence to support this claim (Bandura, 1986; Bandura et al., 1999). These psychological insights illuminate empirical studies that focus on the challenge of teacher retention (Perryman, 2022). More recently, this has been pursued by a research team at OECD (Viac & Fraser, 2020). Their Working Paper references Tschannen-Moran's work on self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Crucially, they highlight how teachers' self-efficacy beliefs shape the effort they are likely to put into their endeavours, their persistence in the face of obstacles and their experience of stress and depression (Viac & Fraser, 2020). OECD's interest in this is linked to the serious implications for teacher recruitment and retention but our main concern here is with the implications for change. If governments

and systems are to secure improvements in levels of educational success and address matters of social justice, they will need teachers who can not only respond to the challenge of change but also play a full and active part in the process of change, including initiating change themselves.

In addition to coping with or being responsive to change, some teachers engage in classroom inquiry. The idea of the teacher as researcher promulgated by Lawrence Stenhouse in the 1970s was taken up by many providers of programmes to support teachers' professional development, especially within the context of university-based academic, award-bearing programmes. Participation in such activities can be linked to a teacher's professionality, as discussed in Chapter 2. The conceptualisation of the 'extended professional' put forward by Hoyle in the 1970s featured the idea that teachers might reach out beyond their own classrooms by participating in professional development courses, joining subject associations and the like in order to connect to a wider knowledge base and maintain awareness of the wider context of their practice (Hoyle, 1974). A critique subsequently offered by Stenhouse included the proposal that teachers should research their own practice and referred to a paper by two teachers who had used 'action research' (1975).

Following Stenhouse's seminal book, the concept of action research was explored by a number of his colleagues. The book *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* included this definition:

> Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.
>
> *(Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 162)*

The term 'action research' has been used to refer to a range of practice-focused inquiry, including, at one end of a continuum, a limited exercise in classroom self-evaluation and, at the other, a large-scale research and development programme. Some specifications of action research emphasise the two important characteristics of criticality and participation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It has also been explicitly connected to the pursuit of social justice (Atweh, Kemmis & Weeks, 1998). Some teachers seized Stenhouse's proposal enthusiastically and, in many cases, their classroom research led to change in their own classrooms and even beyond. However, there were problems. First, only a few teachers embraced the idea, as Stenhouse himself observed some years later: 'it remains an activity for enthusiasts like someone tinkering with his motorcycle in their backyard' (Stenhouse, 1980: 251). Second, there is the question of the extent to which change resulted from teachers' classroom research. It has been frequently observed that when teachers' research is part of a university's masters programme, the emphasis on the rather arcane research methods that hold sway in university departments of education tends to squeeze out a focus

on change. Some university courses introduced their part-time masters students to action research as a specific methodology, but the action side of the equation continued to be neglected and overwhelmed by the perceived need to discuss the finer points of methodology. Elliott referred to this as 'academic imperialism'.

> Are the academics transforming the methodology of teacher-based educational inquiry into a form which enables them to manipulate and control teachers' thinking in order to reproduce the central assumptions which have underpinned a contemplative academic culture detached from the practices of everyday life?
>
> *(Elliott, 1991: 14)*

This has been evident from our personal experience as examiners on a wide range of masters programmes for serving teachers.

Enthusiasm for the concept of action research at Canterbury Christ Church College underpinned the design of a school-based award-bearing programme in the English county of Kent in 1990 (Frost, 1995; 1996). The programme had been initiated to enable teachers to solve problems arising in their professional practice. A group of teachers attended sessions held at their school and facilitated by an academic, David Frost, and a senior teacher at the school, Jim Nixon. Within a few years, the programme leaders revised their thinking about action research as a methodology in the light of experience. Participants in the early stages of the development of the programme were side-tracked by the requirement to produce academic essays in which they tended to find themselves lost in the attempt to explain action research as a tradition or methodology. Participants expressed feelings of guilt and embarrassment because they were behind schedule with 'their homework'. The programme leaders' solution to this problem was to devise a process they called 'reflective action planning' (Frost, 1996). The requirement to write a series of papers was replaced with the idea of a portfolio of evidence together with reflective commentary. Items of evidence included an action plan which had to be subject to consultation with both the college tutor and the participant's line manager at the school. The intention was to ensure that the development work would match the priorities identified by the school's development planning process. The reflective action planning process can be summarised in the list of key steps below:

1. Clarifying professional concerns
2. The personal development plan
3. Action planning
4. Professional action
5. Reporting
6. Portfolio development
7. Review
8. Accreditation

The school-based programme referred to above was adopted by other schools in the region and, as it grew, the reflective action planning approach developed. Refinements were aimed at making the process more supportive of teacher-led change, for example by recognising a wider range of evidence to be included in participants' portfolios. By the end of the 1990s, the approach had become the teacher-led development work methodology (Frost & Durrant, 2002; 2003). Alongside this came the use of the term 'teacher leadership' which had considerable rhetorical power (Frost, 2018b), as illustrated in the title of the aforementioned book first published in the mid-1990s under the title of *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Helping Teachers Develop as Leaders* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996).

Later, when the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative was founded, it was deemed necessary to make a clear distinction between teacher leadership as it was understood, largely in the US, and the more inclusive approach developed through the programme referred to above. In the US, teacher leadership commonly referred to the practice of appointing selected teachers to a formal position, whereas within ITL, it was seen as a practice that any teacher could adopt and so was labelled 'non-positional teacher leadership' (Frost, 2011). This teacher leadership work is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. For our purposes here it is perhaps sufficient to say that it illustrates the potential to enable teachers to become agents of change.

Flipping the system

The discussion above highlights a paradoxical situation regarding the teacher and educational change. It is obvious that change necessarily involves teachers changing what they do and yet, in academic and policy discourse, the teacher's role in change is neglected. When it is discussed, understanding of what empowers and enables teachers to change practice is shallow. The need to address this was signalled when two teachers in the Netherlands put together an edited volume with the title of *Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up* (Evers & Kneyber, 2015). That book included testimony and argument from across the world which amounted to a robust critique of neoliberalist policies. It also offered a variety of alternative viewpoints and visions of alternative practices. The book was followed by *Flip the System UK: A Teachers' Manifesto* (Rycroft-Smith & Dutaut, 2018) and *Flip the System Australia: What Matters in Education* (Netolicky, Andrews & Paterson, 2018). While being supportive of the sentiment expressed by the flip the system slogan, we are not naively suggesting that change in education should be simply left to the judgement of teachers; this would be a denial of the legitimacy of public interest and political intervention. However, if change, at whatever level it is initiated, is to be truly successful, there needs to be a better balance between policy-led change and teacher-led change which arises from the concerns of individual teachers.

A key barrier to achieving this balance is the very concept of implementation which reflects an assumption that there is some kind of direct lever that connects policy to practice. This leads so often to what has been called 'performative implementation' (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2011), in which schools respond to reforms in ways which are at best superficial and, at worst, artificial. This mind-set also undermines teachers' professionalism, diminishes their agency and therefore fails to secure their commitment and enthusiasm. A more productive concept is policy enactment which is a more complex process. It has to take account of teachers' views and lived experience as argued in relation to a study of the enactment of policy about critical thinking in Singapore.

> Rather than neglecting the teachers' pre-existing knowledge, values, interests and practices, policymakers and other educational stakeholders should seek to understand and incorporate these into the process of policy enactment through constant dialogues and negotiation.
>
> *(Tan, 2017: 12).*

Policy enactment has the potential for reforms to be informed by a much deeper understanding of how adult professionals learn. This needs to move beyond simplistic notions of training in which teachers are obliged to pay attention to the usual mix of guidelines, specifications and exhortations, whether in the form of high-quality leaflets or slide presentations. The first priority must be to secure commitment to change rather than mere compliance. As indicated above, it requires opportunities in which teachers' values and beliefs are recognised, their sense of moral purpose is mobilised and they are empowered and enabled to exercise leadership in collaborative development projects. As explained below, this can be achieved, with remarkable results.

As already discussed above, another significant barrier to teacher-led change is the interplay of organisational conditions in schools which have a long history and are deeply embedded. It is widely assumed, for example, that a hierarchical leadership structure is essential both for organisational efficiency and the potential for school improvement. Such assumptions have been reinforced by concepts such as 'line management' and forms of accountability that are shaped by the nature of standardised testing. Such conditions are constraints on teachers' capacity to initiate and lead change. Conditions conducive to teacher-led change include high levels of collegiality and trust and a professional culture in which dialogue that leads to innovation and change is normal.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the transformation of schools requires a different way of thinking about the identity and role of the teacher. We argue for a mode of professionality that is characterised as being radically more agential and crucially includes the exercise of leadership. Some policy makers and school senior leaders may make the mistake of thinking that this can be achieved by making pronouncements about how teachers should see themselves. There has been a whole industry around the production and dissemination of professional

standards which may have some influence (see Chapter 2) but are of limited value. A more productive way to proceed would be to ensure that teachers are provided with frameworks of support which enable them to make decisions based on their moral purpose and pedagogical principles, to engage in practice development in which they exercise leadership in order to create professional knowledge and address matters of social justice.

Finally, teacher-led change requires practical support in the school setting. As described above, we have experience over many years of providing support for non-positional teacher leadership. The facilitative approach is reported to be transformative for those who have taken up the option to participate, but policy makers are reluctant to embrace programmes in which the content and outcomes are not prescribed in advance. To empower teachers to define their own priorities and design their own pathway to the development of practice and professional learning goes against the grain of the dominant pattern of assumptions about how change works. School principals who have made such programmes possible in their schools tend to testify to the value of them, not just for the participating teachers, but also for the development of the professional culture in their schools. The nature of practical support for non-positional teacher leadership is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In summary, we argue that dominant approaches to change in education are failing to take advantage of the potential for teachers to act as agents of change. In arguing for teacher-led change, we are not suggesting that teachers should be the sole originators of change. On the contrary, we recognise that governments who represent communities are obliged to spend public money wisely and have a responsibility to do what they can to improve the effectiveness of their education systems. However, their efforts and resources will be wasted unless they find ways to mobilise teachers' moral purpose and agency. Teachers whose mode of professionality has a strong leadership dimension are likely to see themselves as being agents of change who become accustomed to navigating the context of their institutions and the policy environment. Such skilled operators will be well disposed towards good ideas from wherever they come. It is therefore incumbent on policy makers and their agents to recognise that they are dealing with people who have a knowledge base, pedagogical beliefs and values and their own sense of moral purpose. They can also become skilled at managing collaboration with colleagues and navigating ways forward. It is therefore a mistake to demean them and expect them simply to become aligned. Rather, they need to be cultivated as allies and collaborators.

On World Teachers Day 2024, UNESCO's International Taskforce on Teachers for Education 2030 put out a call for a new social contract for education

in which teachers' voices would be heard and taken seriously. Their report included recommendations for policy makers which align closely with our own proposals.

> Develop holistic and comprehensive teacher policies that foster teacher agency and autonomy based on knowledge, competence and responsibility within education goals, and that foster a climate of trust and respect between school authorities, communities, learners and teachers.
>
> *(UNESCO, 2024a: 18)*

While we wholeheartedly concur, we believe that enabling teachers to exercise leadership can be the means to empower them so that not only are their voices heard but they become effective agents of change, working in partnership with each other, with school principals and with policy makers to transform their schools and education systems.

4

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Mobilising capacity

So far, we have argued that the need for change in education globally is critical and urgent. We have also noted that, in relation to both policy and practice, the neglected dimension is the role of the teacher. In Chapter 1 we make it clear that we are interested in the possibility of teacher-led change which inevitably puts the spotlight on the concept of leadership. In this chapter we focus on leadership and, in so doing, seek to challenge some of the dominant discourses that have shaped leadership theory and practice in the last half-century. Our analysis is framed by what we have already set out in Chapter 2 about teacher identity and teachers' professionality and in Chapter 3 about the landscape of change in education.

While making the case for teacher leadership in general, we put forward the concept of 'non-positional' teacher leadership and consider the cultural and structural conditions that enable it to flourish. The term 'non-positional teacher leadership' arises from the conviction that all teachers, regardless of their position in the organisational hierarchy, have the capacity to exercise leadership in order to develop the curriculum, improve the quality of teaching, maximise students' learning and nurture positive professional cultures in schools. While emphasising the part that teachers can play in educational change, we nevertheless recognise that to unlock that capacity, those in formal leadership positions bear a crucial responsibility as enablers, advocates and stewards. As discussed below, the burden of this falls heavily on school principals and their senior leadership teams.

An overview of the current educational landscape

It is widely accepted that schools, in whatever jurisdiction they operate, can reasonably be expected to aspire to the best possible educational outcomes for all children and young people, equipping them with the knowledge and

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personal, emotional and social skills needed to flourish in a rapidly changing society. However, it is evident that education systems around the world find themselves in difficult times, with schools struggling to fulfil their core purpose. The Covid-19 pandemic unleashed a crisis in children's mental and physical health, exacerbating the ongoing problem of teachers, and those in leadership positions, suffering low morale and burnout, which means that they leave the profession faster than the pipeline of new teacher and leader recruitment can replace them (UNICEF, 2023; TES Institute, 2023). In addition, according to a recent OECD working paper (Suarez & McGrath, 2022), teachers worldwide contend with the challenges of meeting the needs of 'more diverse and heterogeneous student populations', the impact of digital technologies, including social media, and increased accountability for narrowly defined outcomes (Suarez & McGrath, 2022: 7). These challenges are exacerbated in communities caught up in, or emerging from, conflict and war. In such circumstances, the resources required for adequate educational provision drain away. Recruiting qualified teachers becomes impossible, young people are kept out of school, and governance within the system is likely to become undermined by corruption and poor record-keeping (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2013). It is remarkable, however, that in the face of such challenges, the majority of teachers continue to teach.

One response that governments have taken to the turbulent environment in which they find themselves is to seek to raise standards through increased centralisation and measures such as standardised curricula, league tables and punitive inspection regimes. In addition, leadership training courses for prospective and practising principals appear to promote a set of 'superhuman characteristics' needed to improve outcomes and turn around 'failing' schools (Niesche, 2012). Measures such as these assume teachers' deficiencies. They lower teachers' morale, undermine their self-efficacy and stifle their commitment to change and improvement, so it is hardly surprising that so many decide to quit the teaching profession. A recent inquiry commissioned by the National Education Union in England said this:

> Our high-stakes system is neither supportive nor effective and displays a lack of trust in education professionals. It must change and it must change significantly – we are past the point of tinkering around the edges.
>
> *(Perryman et al., 2023: 8)*

Leadership in the public sector

These issues are not confined to education. For many years practitioners, academics and policy makers in public services have debated the challenge of securing high quality service delivery which entails recruiting, retaining and developing a well-motivated workforce (Wart, 2003). A recent report by the UK-based Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that management practices in public services, first introduced in the 1980s and 1990s and imported from the

private sector, are no longer fit for purpose (Quilter-Pinner & Khan, 2023). According to the report's authors, measures originally aimed at improving outcomes have failed to take account of their impact on the motivation of public sector workers. The underlying philosophy of so-called New Public Management (NPM) was that extrinsic motivation in the form of targets and/or incentives would drive behavioural change. However, drawing on subsequent research (for example Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999), the IPPR argues that it is necessary to move from a 'low trust, low skill, low autonomy public service model to a high trust, high skill, high autonomy one' (Quilter-Pinner & Khan, 2023: 5). Intrinsic factors, including the desire for mastery, autonomy and collaborative relationships, are more likely to increase motivation and productivity in the long term. The idea that the leaders of organisations need to secure their employees' commitment rather than mere compliance is well established. According to the OECD, the traditional model of command-and-control leadership is ineffective in meeting the challenges of a society which is increasingly decentralised, knowledge-intensive and inter-connected (OECD, 2001). Ingraham (2009) points to evidence that workers in public sector organisations tend to approach their work with high levels of moral purpose and so are less likely to be motivated by extrinsic rewards.

It is argued that public sector bodies need to adopt more entrepreneurial approaches in order to adapt to the inherent turbulence of the environment (Vivona, 2023). Members of the workforce need to become adept at recognising and taking advantage of opportunities as they arise. However, simply focusing on the strategies leaders employ to motivate their subordinates misses an important dimension of the complex relationship between leaders and those they lead (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). A constructionist approach is more likely to achieve better long-term outcomes because everyone, whether they see themselves as leaders or followers, can be enabled to participate in problem solving and processes of innovation and change. This resonates with our own preferred view of leadership in which people in formal positions do not pursue their goals by coercing or encouraging their staff to enact them; nor is the organisation a site of permanent struggle between leaders and led. Our preferred view is that leadership is the result of the interactions between groups and individuals within an organisation.

In common parlance, 'leadership' is often taken to mean decision making by whoever is at the apex of the organisation, typically the CEO. This prevalent assumption stands in the way of organisational practices that could be described as constructionist, interactive and participatory. The 'heroic leadership' model has been thoroughly debunked, at least in academic literature and expert commentary. A good example is from Margaret Wheatley, a US-based leadership writer.

> Heroic leadership rests on the illusion that someone can be in control. Yet we live in a world of complex systems whose very existence means they are inherently uncontrollable.
>
> *(Wheatley, 2010: 2)*

Wheatley put forward the alternative notion of 'leaders as hosts'. In her specification of this, we see echoes of 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 2002) and 'transformational leadership' (Burns, 2004). Writers such as these are part of a golden thread of accumulated wisdom stretching back to Mary Parker Follett in the 1920s.

> Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power amongst those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.
>
> *(Follett, 1924: 3)*

A host of subsequent writers have echoed the point that the empowerment of others is the key task of those in senior leadership positions. This is a key dimension of capacity building, as referred to in Chapter 3. Achieving such empowerment is no simple matter. For example, it may be supposed naively that if senior leaders just have an 'open door' and a sunny disposition, it will allow subordinates to feel free to voice their views or take the initiative. Another common, and equally naïve, assumption might be that the senior leader simply has to develop the art of delegation. As we discussed in Chapter 2, social structures that lead to the acceptance of hierarchy are deeply ingrained, so even if individuals have high levels of self-belief and enhanced agency, they are still likely to be held back by these structures. Actually, enabling people to act differently is a complex and nuanced affair.

Coercion really does not change hearts and minds, but influence can. In his seminal work on leadership in organisations, Gary Yukl offered this view of the nature of leadership:

> it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization.
>
> *(Yukl, 2010: 21)*

He was referring to the work of the CEO or someone in that kind of role. His specification is very useful and widely applicable, but it begs the question of how influence can be exerted. The assumption of the value of coercion is reinforced by media in representations of powerful leaders whether they be a press baron or an American president, but it is not helpful for senior leaders who want to transform their organisations such that they become innovative and able to achieve excellence.

It is perhaps productive to examine traditional assumptions about leadership through the lens of postcolonial feminist perspectives which shine a light on issues such as representation, knowledge production and historic power relations (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2019a). Perspectives on leadership have always been dominated by knowledge and research from the West (Campbell-Stephens, 2021), but there is a

growing chorus of voices raising questions such as whose knowledge is of most worth, who has the right to create knowledge and who has access to knowledge (KIX, 2023)? There is growing awareness of the 'epistemic violence' that has accompanied colonialism (Lopez, 2021) and knowledge about leadership is particularly problematic, based as it is on the usual assumptions about hierarchy, efficiency and bureaucracy in modern organisations. In 2022, NORRAG and the Institute of International Education launched a campaign under the banner 'The South Also Knows' which they hope will 'create a megaphone to amplify underrepresented expert knowledge' (Sarr, 2023). For us, there are resonances between the global north/south debate about knowledge and our proposals for teacher-led change, so we join calls for epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007).

The practice of leadership

Leadership is often represented as chief executive officers simply making decisions. However, more sophisticated accounts focus on leadership as practice which includes a range of behaviours such as initiative taking, influencing others, offering support and facilitating collaboration (Raelin, 2011). A key implication of this way of thinking about leadership is that the necessary skills can be learned. This is of course antithetical to the assumption that leadership rests on the individual's personality traits which are somehow innate (Zaccaro, 2007), but trait theory has in the main been rejected in the educational leadership literature (e.g. Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Further implications of the leadership practice perspective include the realisation that how leadership is practised is shaped by the specific context. However, perhaps the most significant implication is that, if leadership practice is a set of skills and behaviours, they can be developed by anyone who is motivated to take on the challenge and this of course includes teachers and other members of the school staff.

School leadership

There is no doubt that school principals and their senior leadership teams retain a special responsibility to maximise the effectiveness of their institutions, but their roles are complex and, some would say, full of contradictions.

> In American public schools, the principal is the most complex and contradictory figure in the pantheon of educational leadership. The principal is both the administrative director of state educational policy and a building manager, both an advocate for school change and the protector of bureaucratic stability.
>
> *(Rousmaniere, 2013: 1)*

The tension, expressed by Rousmaniere, between administration and leadership is almost certainly a universal experience, but an important variable is

institutional autonomy. In research focusing on school leadership in Kazakhstan some years ago, school principals were largely puzzled by questions about their strategies to improve their schools. That was the responsibility of the government, they said; their responsibilities included ensuring that the school's boiler was maintained and other administrative matters (Frost, Fimyar & Yakavets, 2014). Since that research was conducted, the government in Kazakhstan has taken some steps towards school autonomy, with the result that discussions about matters such as distributed leadership and transformational leadership begin to make sense to school principals.

School principals the world over have learned to share leadership because they have found it impossible to take care of every aspect of the school as an organisation, whether it be the oversight and support of the staff, the maintenance of the building or relationships with the local community (Pont, Nusche & Morman, 2008). Some principals have understood that the development of practice and increased effectiveness require high levels of collegiality, collaboration, consistency and coherence (Fullan, 2020). The concept of distributed leadership has been a feature of the professional discourse for many years. In England, the now dismantled National College for School Leadership published a report on distributed leadership (Bennett et al., 2003) which was influential. It at least ensured that distributed leadership became part of the discourse for school principals. Subsequently, it was claimed that there was little evidence to suggest it made much difference to student outcomes, but the rhetoric around it reflected a shift in the cultural milieu (Hartley, 2007). A report commissioned a few years later by the European Policy Network of School Leaders described the practice of distributed leadership which they said was well established in northern Europe but less so in the Mediterranean countries (Duif et al., 2013). We have observed in schools in England that school principals on the whole tend to say that leadership is distributed but sometimes this means no more than that responsibility is delegated through a complex system of formal positions (Supovitz, 2015).

Over time, we have seen the titles of such positions in schools in England change from middle manager to middle leader but, in an age of performativity (Ball, 2003; Visser, 2016), it is inevitable that the management imperative continues to override the need to exercise leadership. The distinction between management and leadership is crucial to our argument in support of teacher-led change. Management is about the maintenance of the system as it is and those with designated positions are accountable for their performance as managers, whereas the aim of leadership is to transform the situation. Of course, through the performativity lens it might be supposed that transformation is about increasing test scores, but this would be an impoverished view. Most writers in the field of leadership agree that leadership is about direction setting and influencing others in order to bring about change in the form of improvement in practice and increased capacity for continued improvement. One of the seven 'strong claims about successful school leadership' is this one:

> School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
>
> *(Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020: 10)*

This indirect, yet most powerful, approach to improvement creates the conditions in which all members of the school staff can become maximally agential and thereby more effective. This is what Mitchell and Sackney referred to, in the first edition of their seminal book, as 'profound improvement', based on the idea of the school as a learning community in which

> individuals feel a deep sense of empowerment and autonomy and a deep personal commitment to the work of the school. This implies that people in the school form not just a community of learners but also a community of leaders.
>
> *(Mitchell & Sackney, 2000: 93)*

The idea that everyone in the school should be able to exercise leadership does not detract from the belief that the school principal and senior team have a special responsibility. Their direction setting and influence are critical in enabling others to learn and lead.

Leadership for transformation

The idea of capacity building touched on in the previous chapter is closely related to Mitchell and Sackney's concept of 'profound school improvement' mentioned above and requires a particular approach to leadership commonly referred to as 'transformational leadership' (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). This is often contrasted with 'transactional leadership', which is inevitably an important part of the senior leader's job. School leaders have to intervene directly to ensure, for example, that all members of the staff team are clear about their roles and responsibilities, conflicts are resolved, and organisational efficiency is maintained. Transformational leadership is more future-oriented in that it pays attention to creating a vision for the school, setting the strategic direction and restructuring the organisation so that it is more likely to allow the vision to be realised (Anderson, 2017). The transformational leader goes beyond the usual management of personnel and attends in a strategic way to the professional learning of members of staff (Day & Sammons, 2013). Some may be tempted to jump to the conclusion that the principal's job is to attend to colleagues' wellbeing so that they are more motivated. For example, one school principal told us that they had arranged to have teachers' laundry done. However, while wellbeing is important, it is not sufficient. The overarching goal is to create the conditions within which members of staff can do their best and push the boundaries of their effectiveness both as individuals and collectively. When these conditions are optimal, teachers are likely to have enhanced self-efficacy

beliefs and greater sense of fulfilment in their jobs, which of course leads to improved wellbeing (Bangs & Frost, 2012).

A key dimension of transformational leadership is culture building. Edgar Schein, a professor at MIT's School of Management, argued that developing your organisation's culture is the most important part of the chief executive's work. The term 'culture' is over-used in the media these days to the point where it has begun to lose its meaning, but Schein used it specifically to refer to the dominant pattern of professional values, the norms and standards of behaviour and beliefs in an organisation (Schein, 1985; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). There will always be outliers in any organisation, of course, but what is important is how individuals experience and find themselves influenced by this prevalent pattern in their school.

The outward manifestations of culture building – a new vision statement writ large in the school's reception area, for example – might be misinterpreted as reflecting an authentic shift in the school's professional culture. In reality, the work of changing a culture is long term and arduous. A new vision statement may be part of the senior leadership team's strategy, but it will not of itself determine what each member of staff truly cares about, feels and strives for. Culture building involves careful cultivation over time. There is undoubtedly a great deal a principal can do personally and directly to change the culture. For example, by asking colleagues for advice the principal can help colleagues to feel valued and respected. However, there is much more that can be done indirectly, as is illustrated in the following example. A school's senior leadership team organised an extended coffee break – 30 minutes instead of the usual 10. In the staff room, there were plates of small cakes and biscuits and pots of superior quality coffee. Colleagues were encouraged to talk to someone from a different subject department. The rationale for this was the desire to increase professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) by helping teachers to build relationships in a convivial setting. This would make it more likely that in the future colleagues would engage in collaboration and pedagogic dialogue while avoiding connivance and subtle coercion.

Orchestrated reflection on the school's organisational culture can assist in the promotion of values, beliefs and norms which build capacity for improved effectiveness. Such reflection is powerful because aspects of culture tend to operate unconsciously (Stoll, 1999, after Schein, 1985), so enabling members of the school staff to become aware of the culture and reflect on it can help to change it. At the University of Cambridge in the 1990s a team created a process and tools for schools to use to conduct a 'diagnosis' of their organisational culture (Hargreaves, 1999). The idea of surfacing the values, beliefs and norms that comprise a culture and exposing them to the light of dialogue has important implications both for improving a school's professional culture and, more specifically, for teacher-led change, at least in the way we propose in this book. In the approach presented in Chapter 5, teachers are enabled to reflect on the school culture as part of their preparation for leading change.

Teacher leadership

It has been suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the value of distributed leadership (Youngs et al., 2023). Challenging circumstances led to an ever-greater need for flexibility in decision making, rapid adaptation and on-the-job learning through intensified patterns of interaction and collaboration. This shines a light on the discussion above about alternative interpretations of the idea of distributed leadership: on the one hand, we have the idea of delegating decision-making powers through formal roles of responsibility and, on the other hand, the idea of non-positional teacher leadership in which any member of staff, regardless of status or position, is enabled to exercise leadership. This goes to the heart of the debate about teacher leadership.

The discourse about teacher leadership has gathered pace and intensity since it came into use in the US in the 1980s (Little, 1988). A definition of teacher leadership in a much-cited literature review twenty years ago offered an all-encompassing view of teacher leadership as being

> the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement.
>
> *(York-Barr & Duke, 2004: 187)*

Their definition covers a range of activities, but it must be recognised that, in practice, the dominant approach is to designate a minority of teachers to posts of responsibility. Such 'middle leadership' posts may include ones with the title 'Teacher Leader', but in general there are systems in which teachers can be appointed to roles such as 'Head of Science', 'Assistant Behaviour Lead' and 'Special Educational Needs Coordinator'. In England, this is the 'lattice for school leadership' which the visiting researcher from Philadelphia, Supovitz, wrote about so enthusiastically (2015). However, as stated above, there is little evidence to suggest that those in formal roles have been able to achieve the optimal balance between the responsibility to manage and the need to exercise leadership. In the age of performativity, holding individuals to account for their management responsibilities is relatively straightforward, but the same cannot be said of the exercise of leadership.

In the literature about teacher leadership, especially American sources (Fairman & MacKenzie, 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) but also elsewhere (e.g. Alieu, Kaçaniku & Saqipi, 2024; Hamzah, Mohd Noor & Yusof, 2016), there is usually a distinction made between 'formal' and 'informal' teacher leadership. The former is related to a designated position and the latter floats free of position by focusing on practices such as mentoring, collaborating with colleagues and action research. There is evidence that teachers all over the world are influencing their colleagues, not because they have a

position of responsibility but just because there is a need. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, a teacher told a researcher this:

> Marina helps all teachers, not only me. She is very friendly whoever comes to her for help. … she is always ready to help in anything, she listens to people and provides guidance about class tutoring, documentation etc. (Aminat, novice teacher).
>
> *(Teleshaliyev, 2015: 192)*

This teacher's comment may be immediately recognisable, but what is interesting is the conclusion of the researcher who interviewed Aminat: in Kyrgyzstan, there is evidence of a huge potential for teachers to influence their colleagues, but no institutional support or encouragement for this (Teleshaliyev, 2015). Arguably, this is typical and represents a significant waste of what has been called 'professional capital' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The term 'informal teacher leadership' implies that action is ad hoc, uncoordinated, unsupported and without any strategic dimension. We propose that the teachers, regardless of their status or any formal position, can be deliberately enabled to exercise leadership by employing a facilitative strategy. As we explain in Chapter 5, such enablement can lead to teachers acting in strategic ways which include consultation with senior leaders and others to ensure that teachers' concerns and plans fit well with the school's needs and priorities. This renders the distinction between formal and informal teacher leadership redundant.

Non-positional teacher leadership

Non-positional teacher leadership (NPTL) is at the core of the proposals we are presenting in this book. For us, NPTL is both a position and a strategy. It is a position in the sense that we share the conviction that any teacher – in fact, any adult working in a professional capacity in a school – can be enabled to lead change, regardless of the status, position or role of responsibility they may have within the organisation of the school. This position has been embraced by the many collaborators and colleagues with whom we have worked over the years. NPTL is also a strategy in the sense that we have developed a practical way of enabling teacher-led change.

Our position is in tune with the statement by Linda Lambert at California State University which we quote in Chapter 1. She said that 'Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader' and that this is also a matter of democracy (Lambert, 1998: 9). Her point is reinforced elsewhere (e.g. Neuman & Simmons, 2000), but rarely is it stated so clearly as being a matter of democracy. When we were asked to share our ideas about non-positional teacher leadership with colleagues in the Western Balkans in 2009, we discovered that our approach was welcomed by them, not only because it would help to improve professional practice, but also because it has the potential to contribute

to democratic ways of living in post-conflict societies (Frost, 2011). Through our work with colleagues in the former Yugoslavian countries, we learned a great deal about the connection between more democratic forms of leadership and the pursuit of social justice, as the vignette about the teacher, Zana, illustrates (see Chapter 2). Later, when we collaborated with colleagues in the Middle East, it became apparent that our approach to support for NPTL was construed as having an emancipatory potential. In Palestine, for example, it was argued that support for NPTL lays the groundwork for national renewal through its 'perspective transformation' and the cultivation of critical thinking and democratic leadership (Ramahi, 2018). Issues such as these are explored in Duncan Waite's recent book about leadership as emancipatory practice (Waite, 2022).

Our position is that, rather than construe teacher leadership as something that is additional to teaching, it should be seen as a dimension of all teachers' professionality, as we have explained in earlier chapters. We clarified this in the book, *Transforming Education through Teacher Leadership*, in 2014 and have reiterated it at intervals since then.

> Consequently we argued for an approach to teacher leadership, which does not assume that leadership is linked with positions in the organisational hierarchy of the school. Instead, it recognises the potential of all teachers to exercise leadership as part of their role as a teacher. We believe that all teachers and education practitioners have some leadership capacity. After all, leadership is a dimension of being human…. we argue that it should be seen as an essential part of teachers' professionality.
>
> *(Hill, 2014: 74)*

We realise that this is aspirational, rather than a description of the way things are, but our intellectual endeavour has not been to conduct research to investigate the current state of school leadership; our endeavour is focused on changing the reality we find. We have also experienced considerable success in changing mindsets in the direction indicated above, as we discuss in detail in Chapter 6.

The practice of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is not a type of leadership. Neither is it a leadership style. Arguably, the term lacks conceptual validity (Gronn, 2000), but it does have rhetorical heft which is far more appealing than 'middle management' or its variants. At the rhetorical level, it is a splendid banner to march under: it raises expectations and awareness; it conveys a message of hope and aspiration. One of the problems in discussing leadership is the confusion between 'leadership' and 'leader'; we argue above that it is more productive to talk about the practice of leadership (Raelin, 2011; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004) rather than focusing on the role or position. So, if leadership practice is a set of skills

and behaviours that can be developed by anyone, it is perhaps helpful to specify the kind of skills and behaviours involved. The use of professional standards is an unhelpful way to specify these, but we suggest that lists such as the one included below can enable teachers to imagine the enterprise of leadership.

- Influencing and inspiring others
- Taking the initiative and setting direction
- Offering support and service
- Holding others to account
- Modelling learning behaviour
- Valuing and encouraging

However, the purpose of such a list is only to persuade colleagues that leadership is a recognisable set of behaviours that we can all enact and, in discussions with groups of teachers, such lists will be added to.

In the US, a significant response to the perceived need to specify the practice of teacher leadership appeared in the form of a set of standards developed by a consortium of academics and teacher union representatives. The title of the document is *Teacher Leader Model Standards* which indicates the underlying assumption that the standards are applicable to teachers who occupy those roles (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). The standards themselves provide some guidance on the role of a teacher leader. There are seven domains including items such as 'promoting professional learning', 'using research to improve practice' and 'fostering a collaborative community', all of which are laudable. Each domain is broken down into a number of more specific functions, such as 'Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning'. As a whole, the itemised specification is a good basis for discussion and reflection about how to think about the role of teacher leader and it has proved to be a useful framework for courses for teacher leaders in the US (Berg, Carver & Mangin, 2014).

Similarly, in England, successive governments have taken steps to boost the leadership skills of middle leaders through the National Professional Qualification programme which began as a single NPQ for middle leaders and now includes four versions for specific categories. It is now possible for teachers to participate in courses about Leading Teacher Development or Leading Teaching or Leading Behaviour and Culture or Leading Literacy (Department for Education, 2024a). However, such attempts to specify the parameters and scope of the role of teacher leader perpetuate the idea that the best way to enable teacher leadership is to appoint selected individuals to formal positions with all that implies about authority, incentives and preparation. So, we propose an alternative, more inclusive way to enable teachers to enact leadership practice and develop the capacity to lead.

In this book, we offer a different approach to developing teachers' capacity to exercise leadership, one which is experiential. It enables teachers to identify

aspects of practice that really matter to them and then plan development projects that they will lead. As they enact their plans, they encounter challenges and discover how to overcome them, but the key to their learning about leadership is their membership of a school-based support group. With sensitive facilitation, they can talk about their attempts to exercise leadership and benefit from mutual critical friendship. The dialogue between group members amounts to collective reflection through which everyone present learns about leadership. Typically, teachers discuss matters such as how best to approach colleagues whom they wish to collaborate with. They might begin by thinking that they lack the authority to ask a colleague to discuss a professional matter, but subsequently come to the view that an informal, conversational approach does not require authority. Another typical topic of discussion might be the 'micro-political' challenge (Blase & Anderson, 1995), when the teacher realises that certain colleagues feel a sense of ownership around an aspect of practice. This usually calls for a carefully planned consultation strategy which involves reassurance and persuasion.

The approach described above depends above all on good facilitation which is explored in subsequent chapters. In Chapter 5, we present strategies for enabling non-positional teacher leadership in schools, central to which is facilitation by experienced teachers. Adopting the role of facilitator has enabled many teachers to exercise leadership which is focused on enabling their colleagues to develop their capacity for leadership. It is often the case that facilitators have been members of school-based support groups and have benefited from facilitation by a colleague. There is, of course, an apparent contradiction here in that we argue for non-positional teacher leadership but also propose that some, more experienced teachers act as facilitators. However, in our model facilitators are not appointed, remunerated or released from their normal teaching duties. They volunteer to become facilitators because they care about their schools and find the experience rewarding. This is why, in one of our conference papers, our approach was referred to as 'a perpetual motion miracle' (Frost, 2014a). The implication is that this way of working can result in layers of leadership: principals create the conditions for teacher leadership; experienced teachers act as facilitators of school-based support groups for teachers. Those teachers then design their own development projects, each of which involves collaborating with a group of colleagues.

Conclusion

We have discussed the challenge of leadership in public sector services with a particular focus on school leadership. Our critique of dominant assumptions about leadership points towards the need for a constructionist model which features distributed leadership and transformational leadership. We identify as pivotal the conceptualisation of leadership as a practice comprising a range of behaviours which enable practitioners to set direction in the development of

practice and influence colleagues. We examine the idea of teacher leadership as the key to making schools more 'leaderful' organisations (Raelin, 2003) but offer an inclusive approach – 'non-positional teacher leadership' – in which any teacher or other adult professional working in a school can be enabled to exercise leadership. The key to the sustainable, perpetual motion of improvement though teacher leadership is facilitation from within the school and this is addressed in detail in Chapter 5.

5

STRATEGIES FOR ENABLING TEACHER-LED CHANGE

In Chapter 1, we set out our intention to promote strategies for empowering and enabling teachers as agents of change. In Chapter 2, we argue for a particular mode of teacher professionality in which leadership is a key dimension. In Chapter 3, we argue that authentic change requires the mobilisation of teachers as agents of change who are guided by their moral purpose and pedagogical principles. In Chapter 4, our arguments challenge the dominance of the traditional power structures that underpin leadership in schools, in particular the assumption that effective leadership can only be undertaken by those with delegated authority linked to formal positions. We argue that limiting the leadership of change to the selected few is wasteful and falls short of what is needed to transform education. Our argument is that any teacher can lead change if they are provided with the right kind of support. In this chapter we present strategies, developed over many years, which both empower and enable teachers as agents of change.

Empowerment

The word 'empowering' is used increasingly in a wide variety of contexts from fashion to politics because of its rhetorical appeal. It is argued that the concept of 'empowerment' has been plundered from feminist discourse and used to promote a whole range of products from clothes to diet cola.

> Empowerment is no longer about consciousness raising, or activism, or using your position to lift up and advocate for others. Empowerment today is a bodycon jersey dress made by people paid below minimum wage.
>
> *(Allwood, 2018)*

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The term 'empowering' is also commonly used in social and health care settings to refer to enabling patients to have more control in the management of their health and wellbeing. In some contexts, it is apparently being used as a substitute for 'learning', for example, on a British university's website we see the slogan 'The Empowering University'. In the light of this cultural trend, it is perhaps unsurprising that programmes that aim to improve education often adopt the term 'empowering' even if there is little sign of any explicit strategies designed to empower. The 'Teacher Empowerment for School Transformation' (2024) programme in Malaysia, for example, focuses on building an 'empowered work culture' in schools. The European programme 'Empowering teachers personal, professional and social continuous development through innovative peer-induction programme' (LOOP, 2024) also aspires to empowerment. In a similar vein, case studies of teacher development programmes in different parts of the world are show-cased in a book under the banner of 'empowering teachers' (Reimers, 2020). There are many exciting innovations documented in relation to the programmes mentioned above. Attractive features include the provision of training led by expert subject teachers in schools or enabling teachers and school principals to engage in networking with other schools. However, it is difficult to discern particular strategies that focus on enhancing teachers' agency, mobilising their moral purpose and developing their leadership capacity (see Chapter 3).

As we argue in Chapter 3, action research has offered the promise of empowerment (McLean, 1997; Mertler, 2019). There is some evidence that when teachers undertake sustained action research-based masters degree programmes, they feel a sense of empowerment (Vaughan, 2020), but this remains a minority experience. In any case, we want to emphasise that feeling more in control of your own learning does not necessarily lead to becoming a change agent within the school. True empowerment involves teachers acting on their moral purpose to initiate and design collaborative projects that will bring about change beyond their own practice. This necessarily entails questioning their assumptions about leadership and their own limitations in that regard. When teachers develop the ability to lead and make a difference to established practice in their schools, it might be justifiable to say that they are empowered.

Many school principals will be committed to transformational leadership strategies (see Chapter 4), in which case they may believe that they are already empowering members of their staff and therefore do not need a programme of support to enable teacher-led change. In our experience, school principals who are seeking to transform their schools by empowering members of their staff tend to see the sort of programme we discuss below as an important addition to their strategic repertoire.

An enabling programme of support

What we are offering in this book hinges on the idea of enablement. It is clearly the case that within the teaching profession there are some exceptional individuals who may feel empowered. Such people may achieve rapid promotion to formal leadership positions, write books or become union representatives. They may even be selected for the Global Teacher Prize. However, our concern is with the vast majority of teachers who have the potential, as well as the right, to exercise leadership (Lambert, 1998). Our proposals focus on strategies to enable them to become effective agents of change.

In Chapter 1, we introduced the term 'non-positional teacher leadership' (NPTL) to refer to the conviction that any education practitioner, regardless of any status or formal role of responsibility, can be empowered and enabled to lead change. We suggest that such empowerment is enabled through participation in a sustained, school-based programme of support. Within a school-based support group, teachers would be helped to proceed through a number of steps: to clarify their professional values, identify their concerns, articulate an agenda for change, design a plan for a collaborative development project and, by leading the project, develop their leadership capacity.

It is important that such a programme is arranged so that it can be smoothly integrated into participants' busy professional lives and disruption to students' learning is avoided. This means that it must be located within their own workplace, with sessions taking place at the end of the teaching day, typically between 4 and 6 pm; this would minimise inconvenience and cost. This contrasts strongly with teacher development programmes that require participants to travel to other sites such as a university or a professional development institute for courses that may be held in the evenings or at weekends. If sessions are held towards the end of the school day, there is less impact on the teacher and no cost to the school or district authority for substitute teaching. Our recommendation is that the programme consists of a series of monthly workshop sessions, usually lasting two hours and held in a suitable room within the school. Other configurations may be viable, but our recommended approach is the one most likely to be sustainable.

Over more than three decades, we have helped to launch many programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership and they have been badged under various titles. For example, in 1989, one programme was called 'School-Based Diploma'. Since 2004, the programme in schools in Hertfordshire was entitled 'The Teacher-Led Development Work' programme. In Istanbul, colleagues adopted the title 'Twenty First Century Teachers' and, in Palestine, a similar programme was called 'Teachers Leading the Way'. In the proposals we are presenting here, we are using the term 'Non-positional Teacher Leadership' (NPTL) as a programme title. It has also been the case that the methodology can be deployed within already established projects led by organisations external to the school. An example of this is the APREME project which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Establishing a school-based NPTL programme

There are several issues to consider when planning to establish a non-positional teacher leadership programme. These are discussed below.

Initiating a programme

A programme may be initiated by a school principal because they believe that shared leadership has the potential to benefit teachers, schools and society (Woods & Roberts, 2018). The initiator may be part of the school leadership team or someone who has a particular responsibility such as 'professional development' or 'improving the quality of student learning'. Our methodology for supporting non-positional teacher leadership has also been adopted as part of an implementation strategy in projects initiated by organisations including government authorities and NGOs. The agreement of those in authority will be necessary prior to a programme commencing. In England, this may be the school's headteacher or principal. If the school is part of a wider institution such as a multi-academy trust, permission may need to be sought from the Chief Executive Officer. In some countries, schools may need to seek approval from local government authorities or even the ministry. In many cases, the initiator will need to present an account of the potential benefits of this type of programme, drawing on the evidence detailed in Chapter 6.

We also have experience of programmes that support non-positional teacher leadership being initiated by university academics as part of their postgraduate degree programmes or collaborative school improvement projects. Similarly, staff at non-governmental organisations may initiate and facilitate activities that empower teachers as agents of change. External provision of this kind can be successful but there is a major issue concerned with sustainability. If the facilitator undertakes the role as part of a research project or an initiative funded outside of the school's normal resources, it is likely that the programme will not be repeated once the funding is withdrawn. For this reason, we are focusing on sustainability.

A good example of a sustained approach is a school in Hertfordshire, England where, in its first year, the programme was facilitated jointly by a university academic and a member of the school's senior leadership team (Mylles & Frost, 2006). After one year, a member of the group was asked to become a co-facilitator. The university academic withdrew so that the two teachers could co-facilitate and in the third iteration of the programme in that school, the co-facilitator became the lead facilitator and a member of the group from the second year joined her as co-facilitator. This pattern continued for 20 years.

Inviting members of staff to participate in the programme

It may be common for school principals to choose who they think should participate in professional development programmes, based on their view of the

potential benefit for the individual, school or both. Our experience tells us that it is more effective to put out an open invitation to all members of staff to participate in an NPTL programme. This may involve a presentation at a whole staff meeting or sending round a flyer by email. Conversations with individual members of staff can be useful to assure people that the programme is for them and to help them develop the confidence to put themselves forward. The main message to get across is that anyone – with or without formal power and authority – can be an agent of change and that this programme will help individuals to fulfil that potential. It is also the case that an NPTL programme can enable those with formal leadership positions to lead change more effectively.

The size of the school-based support group is an important variable. The dialogic nature of the programme means that groups need to be large enough to ensure that the sessions feature a variety of viewpoints which, in our experience, means a minimum group size of 8 participants. A group larger than 12 people is likely to mean it is difficult to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. In secondary or high schools, the size of the staff body should mean that a group of 8–12 participants would be viable. In smaller schools, it may be more difficult to reach a viable group size. In this case it is usual for schools to collaborate to run joint groups, with one facilitator from each school supporting workshops together to ensure that institutional contexts are considered. It is possible to accommodate a greater number of participants by initiating more than one group and having a programme in which two or more groups are linked.

The invitational approach to group formation is important. In some parts of the world, it may be normal for teachers to be given time off their teaching commitment or additional remuneration when they take part in professional development activities. We strongly advise against this on the grounds that individuals need to be committed to making a difference to themselves and their school if their participation is to be successful. Offering extrinsic rewards diminishes the intrinsic value of the programme and may result in a lack of commitment by some group members.

A suitable space for group sessions

The type of room matters because, if it is clean and has suitable furniture, good ventilation and lighting, it shows that teachers are respected and valued. Similarly, it is important for the room to be furnished with desks so that participants can lay out their papers and make notes. The seating needs to be arranged in such a way that everyone can see each other, face-to-face, in order to maximise the possibility of good discussion and the development of good relationships between group members. A classroom can be used for the workshops once the students have gone home but there needs to be time set aside to rearrange the room and ensure that it is clean and welcoming. Some schools are fortunate enough to have a dedicated 'community room' or 'committee room' which might be made available for group sessions. In the case of an NPTL

programme launched in a school in Istanbul, a problem occurred because there was nowhere for teachers to meet. The school did not have a staff room and classrooms were not available after the teaching day, so the facilitator approached the school principal to discuss the problem. The eventual outcome was that a space that had been used for storage was refurbished and equipped as a room for teachers' meetings (Bolat, 2013).

It is worth noting that during the Covid pandemic school-based groups migrated to an entirely online environment. Facilitators soon learned how to adapt their workshops so that they could operate using video conferencing facilities.

Teacher-led change

The core purpose of an NPTL programme is to enable teachers to lead change but we suggest that the best way to do this is through the leadership of development work and, specifically, the medium of a development project. As we argued in Chapter 4, it would be misleading to construe this as 'informal leadership'. Development work is strategic, focused and deliberate action intended to bring about improvements in professional practice through an iterative process, extended over time (Frost et al., 2018). It involves collaborative processes designed to develop aspects of practice. It features activities such as consultation, negotiation, reflection, self-evaluation, inquiry and deliberation which take place in planned sequence. A development project arises from something an individual cares about and wishes to change, and although the project is their design, they are enabled through their participation in the NPTL programme to consult a range of colleagues in their school to ensure that the project has sufficient support and to gather ideas about its focus and the plan of action. Consultation tends to be the beginning of dialogue that leads to collaboration in which the change agent draws colleagues into their development project.

The development project is powerful because it is time-bounded – over the course of an academic year, for example – and it is focused. By contrast, positional leaders are likely to have a more wide-ranging brief, management responsibilities and accountabilities which leave little time for initiating and sustaining the leadership of change (Frost, 2019). A participant in an NPTL programme will design a project that arises out of their desire to make a difference to something they care deeply about, so their sense of moral purpose and agency is ignited and mobilised in the pursuit of improved practice.

The shape of an NPTL programme

The shape of an NPTL programme differs between contexts. However, there are some common features which support teachers in the process of development work:

- programmes of support lasting at least one academic year
- school-based support groups for 8–12 people in a school

- workshops facilitated by experienced teachers
- group sessions held on the school site at the end of the teaching day
- a pre-planned programme of sessions – typically 8 x 2 hours per annum
- each participant defines and leads their own development project
- one-to-one tutorials/mentoring sessions
- networking opportunities
- certification based on portfolios of evidence

These elements have arisen out of many years of expert practice and the refinement of the approach. However, the list should not be taken as prescriptive. We have always encouraged facilitators to feel free to adapt the structure of the programme to fit their context and to amend the workshop tools provided as part of the support materials.

The NPTL programme is designed to enable participants to progress through a step-by-step process which enables them to do the following:

1. Reflect on their values and concerns as an individual
2. Identify an aspect of practice they would like to develop
3. Consult colleagues about their concern and a possible focus for development
4. Clarify their agenda for change
5. Produce an action plan for a development project
6. Consult colleagues about their action plan and adjust it accordingly
7. Lead the development project
8. Evaluate the project and plan for its legacy
9. Share the story of their project with colleagues in the school and in other schools
10. Submit a portfolio of evidence and be awarded a certificate

Scheduling group sessions over the entire time period of the programme and at regular intervals allows participants to keep a sense of momentum while also having time to move their project forward between sessions. Holding workshops in a suitable space in participants' own schools makes it as easy as possible for them to attend.

Facilitating non-positional teacher leadership

Once it has been agreed that the programme is to be established, the most important decision concerns who will facilitate the programme. It may be that the person who has suggested creating an NPTL programme could themselves take on the role, but when the initiative is taken by the school principal or someone at the district office, suitable members of staff need to be identified and asked to take on the role of facilitator. The role of facilitator is key, and experience tells us that a school-based group needs two facilitators working

together. This is advantageous because two people working together leads to creativity in planning the programme; in group sessions the facilitators can share out between them the leadership of each activity in the workshop; the burden of providing one-to-one tutorials can be shared. This is especially important when the group size is large. Facilitators need ideally to be experienced teachers from within the school who are interested in working with colleagues and contributing to improving the school's effectiveness. It may be possible for someone external to the school to take on the facilitator role in the first instance but for the programme to be sustainable, the external person should aim to build the capacity within the school by inducting experienced teachers into the role. Once facilitators have been identified, they need to prepare by familiarising themselves with the methodology we explain below. The guidance document at the core of the support materials that accompany this book should be sufficient for this purpose (www.routledge.com/9781041032717).

The methodology that underpins the type of programme we are promoting has a history. In Chapter 2, we provided a brief sketch of the origins and development of the approach. A full account of the emergence and development of the thinking that underpins our approach can be found in a collection of David Frost's publications about teacher leadership over a 30-year period (Frost, 2025a). The growth in our understanding and practical ability has been accompanied by changes in both the nomenclature of the programme we are currently presenting and its methodology. Currently, we are using the term Non-Positional Teacher Leadership (NPTL) as the title of a programme designed to empower and enable teachers, regardless of status or position.

The facilitative methodology used in the NPTL programme has for the last 20 years been referred to as 'teacher-led development work' (Frost & Durrant, 2003). It has also been used as the basis of different programmes with more specific aims, for example, the 'Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment' led by Educational International (2021–4) and the 'Remote and Rural Schools in Kazakhstan' project led by UNESCO (2023–5). Elements of the methodology have also underpinned award-bearing university programmes and school development projects (Durrant, 2020).

The role of the facilitator

Facilitation is the antithesis of training and instruction. It rests on a quite different set of values and assumptions, for example the importance of respecting those who are being facilitated and appreciating that their experience and knowledge are valuable resources. It is also assumed that in an NPTL group, teachers' sense of moral purpose and inquisitiveness are the key drivers in the development of their understanding and ability to take action. Facilitation is a constructivist practice and is therefore social, active and dialogic (Richardson, 2003). The facilitator's job is to provide the scaffolding that enables the participants to interact and engage in a process of reflection, dialogue and

discussion. This is why facilitators need to create a sense of community by making participants feel welcome, valued and respected. They must minimise the extent to which participants regard their facilitators either as experts or as authorities. This may be challenging when the facilitator also occupies a senior role in the school. This can be ameliorated by sitting alongside the participants in the workshop circle rather than standing or occupying a separate space as a traditional teacher would. It can also be countered by taking care not to judge participants' comments. So, for example, when a teacher makes what might seem to be an unhelpful comment, the facilitator might say, 'Thank you; what do other members of the group think?' Facilitators manage discussion so that the interaction between the range of viewpoints and perspectives becomes the mechanism through which participants can reflect on their values, beliefs and assumptions.

Principles underpinning the methodology

The first principle is that teachers' identities must be recognised and mobilised as a resource. We all have our own values and beliefs, our own lived experience which guides our thinking and action. Facilitators need to enable group participants to share their experiences. This approach enables individuals to draw upon their unique characteristics and lived experiences as resources which can be mobilised within the support group and within their own reflection and planning. Sharing implies listening by others, so the ability to enable participants to listen appropriately to each other is an important facilitation skill.

The second principle underpinning a facilitative approach is that talk between teachers is of paramount importance. Workshop activities in the support groups are designed to enable interactive talk, either between two or three people or within the whole group. This helps participants to reflect on their values and beliefs and process their ideas about their proposed development projects. It enables them to develop their understanding through comparison, contrast and shared reflection. The ensuing debate and critical friendship involve both mutual support and challenge. Beginning in the planning stage, this continues through the course of participants' projects, supporting the development of their thinking, allowing projects to develop incrementally as understanding grows.

The two principles outlined above guide the enactment of the facilitative programme, which rests on six key strategies:

1. Create a sense of community
2. Use tools to scaffold reflection and dialogue
3. Introduce concepts that challenge the norms that limit participants' thinking
4. Provide only essential guidance

5. Create a pathway to certification
6. Collaborate with facilitators elsewhere to arrange networking opportunities

Below, we discuss these in turn.

Strategy 1: Create a sense of community

If the principles stated above are to be realised in practice, teachers and others participating in an NPTL programme need to feel that they belong to a community, one that they can rely upon to support their leadership endeavours. Although the idea is linked to that of professional learning communities (Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007), the sense of community in the NPTL programme has particular characteristics. It is important that the group consists of volunteers who commit to the process as a whole which would typically unfold over the course of an academic year.

As we have said above, holding group sessions in a suitable space in participants' own schools makes it as easy as possible for them to attend. It is also important that, in this room, a welcoming and convivial atmosphere can be created. Providing refreshments at the start of the session helps participants to get to know one another and to gain some energy for the reflection and debate which is to come. This mark of respect can also lead participants to feel valued which increases motivation. In the first session, time is given to extended introductions in which individuals talk about themselves and what matters to them. 'Ground rules' or protocols around confidentiality and respect are set in this session so that participants can freely share their concerns, successes and failures as their development work progresses. The room in which groups meet should be sufficiently private to allow such discussions to take place. As we said earlier, all the participants should be able to see one another to enable the process of dialogue and reflection. Furniture may need to be re-arranged to facilitate this.

Strategy 2: Use tools to scaffold dialogue

The term 'tool' in this context refers to a device which is usually on paper but could be shared digitally. Tools provide structure and shape for participants' reflections and dialogue. For example, a tool might include a vignette (a condensed story) which exemplifies something that participants need to think about and some questions to aid reflection and discussion. By using tools of this nature, facilitators direct participants' attention to their own ideas and plans. They provide the 'scaffolding' for reflection and dialogue which is not directly steered by the facilitator. Tools provide structure in the form of examples and questions or statements that act as prompts to catalyse reflection, deliberation, discussion and planning.

Having distributed a tool which corresponds to the aim for a particular workshop activity, the facilitators' role is to explain the purpose of the tool and

then listen in to the ensuing discussions between participants in order to prepare for the debrief. Once the time allocated for the discussion has been used up, the facilitators need to bring the activity to a close and enable the group as a whole to reflect on what has been learned. This is not an opportunity to instruct or make judgement on what participants have said but rather it is an opportunity to enable all members of the group to engage in what might be called 'meta-reflection' (Thorpe & Garside, 2017). This involves facilitators posing questions to try to achieve a synthesis of what has been discussed. It might involve asking for examples of issues that came up or asking participants to give an example of an insight that emerged from the discussion.

Strategy 3: Introduce concepts that challenge norms that limit people's thinking

Teachers, like all of us, inhabit cultural worlds that are subject to ideological influences. A culture is a web of norms that shape our beliefs and assumptions which can both promote and impede teachers' development as change agents. As argued in Chapter 2, we humans have agency and therefore have the option of accepting and reinforcing the norms and values that are features of the cultural world or challenging them (Giddens, 1984). Although there is a focus on processes within the NPTL programme, it is also necessary to introduce some concepts which disrupt assumptions that are taken for granted and enable us to think more deeply about our experience in school. Some tools in the support materials therefore introduce concepts such as 'transformational leadership' and 'leadership as practice'. Discussing these concepts challenges common assumptions about the nature of leadership which may prevent teachers from seeing themselves as leaders. As discussed earlier in this book, this might include the belief that leadership should only be exercised by those in positions of authority.

Strategy 4: Provide only essential guidance

This may seem contradictory, in that facilitation is all about enabling participants to share their experience and ideas rather than processing information provided by an instructor. Nevertheless, making some information available and giving some advice is necessary but such guidance should not become dominant or undermine participants' reflections and exchange of ideas.

A few of the tools in the support materials also contain guidance, either directly or implicitly. For example, one tool includes four bullet points about the rationale for looking into the literature relevant to the individual's project followed by a list of organisations that publish reports and digital sources.

Another source of guidance is the one-to-one tutorial or mentoring session which should be a brief but well-focused conversation occurring in a private space ideally three times during the course of the programme. In these tutorials, participants will seek support in clarifying their action plans, retaining evidence from their development project or making sense of their experience of leading

change. The role of the facilitators who provide the tutorials is to listen to the teacher, reflect back to them what they are hearing and 'nudge' the teacher towards alternative explanations or actions. The word 'nudge' seeks to convey a feedback style in which the facilitator gently prompts the teacher to think further, rather than a directive, instructional feedback mode. The facilitator thus continues to support teacher empowerment rather than diminishing their sense of agency through assuming the role of expert.

Strategy 5: Create a pathway to certification

Experience tells us that teachers participating in NPTL programmes put a high value on certification. Teachers have told us that the award of a certificate strengthens their determination to complete the programme, and it signifies recognition of the individual's sustained effort and achievement. There are examples of programmes using the NPTL methodology without the certification element (Durrant, 2020). However, our recommendation is that initiators of NPTL programmes would be well advised to pursue this possibility.

Many teachers will have received a certificate when they have taken up a professional development opportunity. However, we are recommending certification based on the assessment of teachers' portfolio of evidence of participation in the programme and their leadership of development work, rather than just attendance. The portfolio is a collection of separate pieces of evidence compiled in a variety of formats including a scrapbook, a collection of A4 sheets, bound or in a folder, or in a digital format. It is not a polished, typed document. Items of evidence should be added to the portfolio on day one and then continuously throughout the programme. Items of evidence may include artefacts such as records of group sessions, minutes of meetings with colleagues and photographs of aspects of the project. Each item will be preceded by a brief commentary which clarifies what the item is and its significance. At the conclusion of the process, participants will be asked to ensure that items are clearly labelled and ordered sequentially. They are also asked to write a project story which is a narrative of the project as a whole and a short reflective statement about their experience of participating in the programme. Portfolios would then be assessed by facilitators against published criteria.

Procedures and arrangements for the award of certificates could be created within a single school but the certificate is likely to be seen to be more valuable if it is awarded by a consortium of schools or a larger organisation. It may be possible to arrange for certificates to be awarded by a university but, in some systems, this would entail enrolment fees. Another possibility is for initiators to make a request to relevant government agencies for the certificate to be accepted as equivalent to a particular number of credits in a points-based system. The award of certificates by consortia or larger organisations presents an additional challenge. It would be necessary to ensure that teachers' portfolios are assessed against the same criteria and to the same level of rigour, a process usually referred to as moderation.

Strategy 6: Collaborate with facilitators elsewhere to arrange networking opportunities

With a school-based programme there is the potential for insularity and a limited range of perspectives, so enabling participants in an NPTL programme to interact with colleagues from other schools, and even other countries, is invaluable. More importantly, networking gives teachers the opportunity to engage in knowledge building, a term which refers to the way participants engage in dialogue, mutual critical friendship, comparison and contrast stimulated by a teacher telling the story of their project. The knowledge that is added to and deepened through this dialogic process is not a fixed commodity; rather, it is a fluid phenomenon that can be discerned in the flow of discourse over many network events and back in the schools. Network events allow busy practitioners to come together within a safe space to share ideas, challenge perspectives and offer each other critical friendship and inspiration. When it works well, networking also contributes to enhancing professional identity, moral purpose and self-efficacy, as we discuss in Chapter 6.

NPTL facilitators can collaborate to arrange network events which can be brief and low cost. In the HertsCam Network in England, for example, events were held several times each year and were hosted by schools after teaching had finished for the day (e.g. 4.30–6 pm). Students at the schools would be asked to act as stewards to assist with car parking, directions, refreshments and so forth.

A HertsCam network event would typically include:

- a short period of time for preliminaries such as registering attendance
- a plenary session to welcome visitors and clarify the programme
- a poster session
- a series of parallel workshop sessions (perhaps two)
- a final plenary session

We also know about networking in sister networks in other countries which are often more costly, for example by taking place over a whole day. This seems problematic because, if the event is held on a weekday, the students will have to remain at home and therefore be deprived of a day of their entitlement to schooling, but if the event is held at the weekend, the teachers have to give up a day needed for rest and preparation.

The six strategies outlined above constitute the building blocks of a good NPTL programme. However, there is another important dimension that makes a difference to the extent to which non-positional teacher leadership will flourish, and this is the unique context of the school in which the programme operates. The actions of the school principal and their senior leadership team are therefore a crucial variable.

The role of the school principal

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, we recognise that some school principals will already have adopted transformational leadership strategies and so it may be obvious to them how to provide an environment that is conducive to an NPTL programme. In some schools there may be a tension between the organisational culture of the school and the programme. In some schools the programme may have been launched at the behest of someone other than the school's principal with the result that the programme, while being permitted, is not necessarily regarded as being of strategic importance. The likely consequence of this is that the senior leadership team may not convey any expectations of the teachers' development work or take action that helps to create an environment conducive to teacher-led change.

Twenty years ago, the role of the principal was the subject of discussion at a seminar for school principals in the HertsCam Network (Frost, 2004). The report that arose detailed a range of ways in which principals, and their senior leadership colleagues, could both support and get the best out of an NPTL programme. For example, principals said that they should celebrate and praise the teachers' development work and ensure that the school's organisational structures were ones that provided opportunities for members of staff to discuss the development work emerging from the NPTL group. One of the principals talked about the habit of inviting two or three participants in the NPTL programme to attend lunch-time senior leadership team meetings where sandwiches and coffee were provided. At these meetings, the teachers were invited to talk about their development projects (Mylles, 2017). The teachers who experienced this reported that they did not feel that they were being held to account but instead that they were being shown respect. They also found senior leaders' questions and suggestions helpful.

Occasionally, school principals, especially in small primary schools, have participated as a member of the group in the NPTL programme but, in most cases, this is unhelpful because the principal's presence will change the nature of the discussion. Group members will not feel free to engage in honest reflection and dialogue. They will almost certainly have become accustomed to regarding the principal as the authority figure whose comments will be seen as carrying far more weight than anyone else's. This would undermine one of the key principles explained above, which is that talk between the participating teachers is paramount.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have set out in brief the strategies to enable non-positional teacher leadership that we have been involved in developing over many years. Those interested in taking this further will be able to view and download the support materials (www.routledge.com/9781041032717) which include a substantial document called 'Non-Positional Teacher Leadership (NPTL): Information and

Guidance' (Frost, 2025b) and a shorter 'Planning Your Non-Positional Teacher Leadership Programme' guide. These are accompanied by Workshop Session Guides for each of the eight recommended sessions, together with a set of workshop tools in each case.

In Chapter 6, we provide evidence of the impact of NPTL on teachers, both those who participate and those who are drawn into collaboration with group members in the flow of their development projects. Evidence of the impact on professional practice and portraits of the type of projects that NPTL participants lead are also presented and discussed. The impact of teachers' development work on the school as an organisation is discussed, as is the way that participants have been able to contribute to professional knowledge and exercise influence beyond the boundaries of their schools, education systems and countries.

6

TRANSFORMATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The evidence

In the previous chapter we presented a methodology for empowering teachers and enabling them to lead change. In this chapter we explore the transformation that can be attributed to non-positional teacher leadership. We adopted a scholarly approach from the very beginning of this work in 1990 and have deployed our intellectual capacities in direct and practical ways, enabling sustained reflexive evaluation to support continued development. Thus, we have an accumulated body of evidence to underpin our claims about the efficacy and benefits of non-positional teacher leadership and the methodology we have used to support and develop it. As we said in Chapter 1, we have engaged in what we might call praxis (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), which could be understood as a pragmatic interweaving of critical analysis, dialogue and action.

Our exploration of transformation draws on a great deal of accumulated evidence gathered in the course of our work over several decades. From the outset, we have collected evidence to feed into a continuous process of reflection, dialogue, evaluation and practice development. It has been a collaborative process in which teachers, support staff, senior school leaders, academics and civil society activists have been connected to the work, in some cases over decades. Many others have played important roles in this process over just a few years. Occasionally, there have been research projects and systematic evaluations such as the one conducted by colleagues at Nazarbayev University's Graduate School of Education (Qanay, Courtney & Nam, 2021), one commissioned by Educational International (Bangs & Frost, 2012) and one conducted by the Centre for Educational Leadership at the University of Hertfordshire as part of the EFFeCT project (Woods, Roberts & Chivers, 2016). However, most of the research about the non-positional teacher leadership approach has occurred in series of doctoral studies; these include our own (Frost, 1999; Holden, 2002; Durrant, 2013) and, subsequently, many at

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the University of Cambridge (Bolat, 2013; Teleshaliyev, 2015; Eltemamy, 2018; Underwood, 2017; Ramahi, 2018; Lightfoot, 2019; Kanayeva (Qanay), 2019). There have also been a number of masters level studies (e.g. Mylles, 2005; Hill, 2008; Wearing, 2011; Creaby, 2011) focusing on support for non-positional teacher leadership and offering valuable perspectives from senior school leaders.

Our account also draws on a substantial collection of teachers' own stories of change. Teachers involved in our programmes have documented their participation and development projects in the form of portfolios of evidence. Some have written dissertations within a masters degree programme. Portfolios and dissertations have provided the basis for a large number of narrative accounts, many of which have been edited and published as chapters in books (e.g. Frost, 2014b; Frost, 2017; Frost et al., 2018) and as journal articles (e.g. Frost, Hill & Lightfoot, 2019). In addition, we have showcased teachers' development projects in our own journals: *The Enquirer* was launched at Canterbury Christ Church College in 1990, and *Teacher Leadership* was published at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education between 2006 and 2012. Both journals broadcast teachers' stories.

It is significant that there has also been a great deal of internal publication of teachers' narrative accounts within schools and networks which have fuelled discourse and inspired others to act. Enabling and encouraging teachers to create narratives about their leadership of change is an important dimension of our methodology for supporting non-positional teacher leadership. School-based group sessions include workshop activities which ask participants to rehearse the story of their development work. It is often framed as preparation for participation in a networking opportunity, but it has a more fundamental purpose, which is about strengthening the story teller's agency and enabling collective learning from the experience. The idea has universal applicability, as has been demonstrated in Amanda Roberts's work in the field of palliative care. In her discussion about the power of story-telling, she refers to the part it plays in meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

> [they] tell personal stories through which they identify themselves as alcoholics. In so doing, they open up the possibility of behaving differently within this identity – of not drinking – and therefore of making a new identity. Their personal narratives can both reveal new understandings to the teller and act as texts which listeners can reinterpret (Steffen, 1997).
>
> *(Roberts, 2024: 24)*

In this extract we see the important link between identity (as discussed in Chapter 2), narrative and change.

Narratives also have an important function in processes of knowledge building – the interactive exchange of ideas and shaping of knowledge through dialogue. Teachers participating in non-positional teacher leadership programmes are asked to engage in networking by attending events. In the early days of our

work these tended to be staged in universities and local authority buildings but latterly they have been hosted by schools. Typically, these would be attended by many teachers – sometimes only 30 but often between 50 and 100 – who have come together to build professional knowledge by sharing stories of their development work and offering mutual critical friendship (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Teachers present their narrative accounts in a variety of ways but, because there is limited time available for such activities, they are obliged to be succinct. They may have ten minutes to share their story in a workshop setting or they may have only one minute as part of a sharing circle.

The written vignette is another exercise in concision. The word 'vignette' has many uses across the world but here we use it to refer to a brief story that conveys the essence of a project. Some call these mini-case studies. Teachers participating in programmes to support their leadership of change are frequently exposed to vignettes which exemplify aspects of leading development work. Vignettes of between 200 and 500 words can capture the essence of a teacher's development project and can be read and understood very quickly (Frost, 2018b). They can be used as tools in workshop activities to help participants imagine their own projects and develop critical perspectives on their design. They can also be used for the purposes of promotion and advocacy, for example by appearing in presentations about non-positional teacher leadership.

Publishing teachers' narratives has served many purposes. One is to valorise teacher leadership and to show respect for teachers' achievements. Our commitment to broadcasting teachers' stories has been shaped by the belief that teachers are undervalued and not listened to. In this regard we are in harmony with arguments by Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) and, later on, Michael Apple (2006), in which they called upon academics in the field of education to accept the responsibility to act as story tellers and secretaries to ensure that teachers' voices are heard (Durrant, 2013; Frost, 2014a).

Narratives of teachers' development work also serve to inspire other teachers to take up the challenge of leading change. When a teacher stands up to tell their story about having been concerned that a particular group of students were experiencing obstacles to learning and their decision to take action to address the problem, they are telling a story about educational injustice. Such stories convey a message about the moral obligation to take action and they inspire colleagues to act similarly to address matters of social justice. Narrative accounts are powerful because they are relatable. They have the potential to convey the complexity and nuance of the individual's experience which stimulates listeners' empathy and imagination.

Our account also draws on data collection for the purposes of evaluative feedback, for example at the conclusion of a network event or a non-positional teacher leadership programme. This sort of data would be processed by facilitators as part of the routines of quality assurance. From time to time, additional data would be collected to explore particular issues, for example the seminar for senior leaders hosted by a school principal in Hertfordshire mentioned in Chapter 5.

Linked to the above, we have engaged in sense-making and theorising amongst a wide network of collaborators in many countries which has fed into a steady flow of publications from the early 1990s until the present day. These have included journal articles, book chapters and conference papers, many of which are cited throughout this book. We are now able to draw on this rich bank of material to explore the transformative effect of non-positional teacher leadership.

Our reflections and evaluations have been shaped by the outcome of a small-scale research project through which we clarified and validated a framework for thinking about the impact of teacher-led development work. Interviews were conducted with teachers from two different locations in England who identified themselves as having led development work in their schools. They were invited to talk about their development work and explore the scope of the impact of their projects as well as the antecedents and conditions that acted as affordances and inhibitors. The arising framework was published (Frost & Durrant, 2002) and subsequently used as the basis of tools that have helped teachers plan their projects with the aim of maximising impact. Tools have also helped them to evaluate their projects, both in the flow of the work and at its conclusion. The categories developed through this research inform the analysis presented in this chapter. In Chapter 5, we discussed key strategies for facilitating non-positional teacher leadership amongst which is to introduce concepts that challenge the norms that limit participants' thinking. Disrupting and extending participants' assumptions about the potential impact of their development work is part of that. Tools derived from the Impact Framework have been used to challenge the assumption that the value of an initiative can be judged only by establishing a causal link to improved students' test results. Through this work, participants have been able to extend their expectations of impact to include items such as 'the development of more positive attitudes to school and particular subjects' on the part of students or 'enhanced clarity of purpose and commitment' on the part of teachers or 'more effective structures for deliberation and decision making' within the organisation of the school.

Since our exploration of transformation is complex and multi-dimensional, the discussion below is organised into four parts: Part I – Teacher transformation, Part II – Transformation of practice, Part III – Transformation of schools, and Part IV – Transformation beyond the school. At the conclusion of the chapter, we draw together the threads of our argument about the potential benefits and impact of non-positional teacher leadership.

Part I – Teacher transformation

Programmes for practising teachers are often construed as training, which, as discussed in previous chapters, is disempowering and narrow in its focus on specific skills and information that have been determined by experts. The term 'professional development' suggests a broader approach which also addresses teachers' career development. The term 'professional learning' is one we prefer and have used in preceding chapters because it offers the possibility of learning

that is self-directed and not necessarily connected to the delivery of state-validated provision. Nicole Mockler draws on seminal work by Judith Warren Little (2012) when she offers a view of good professional learning as

> differentiated; contextualised; connected to teachers' problems of practice, curiosities and prior knowledge; collegial and collaborative; and encouraging of risk taking and experimentation opportunities …
>
> *(Mockler, 2022b: 170)*

This strongly resonates with our proposals for non-positional teacher leadership, because it challenges the assumption that the focus should be entirely on the teacher as an individual. We are interested in educational change more broadly, and so are concerned with the institutional context, education systems and the wider social implications. However, one of the outcomes of the non-positional teacher leadership approach we espouse is teacher transformation, which includes not only professional learning but also enhanced professionality and increased levels of capability and self-efficacy (see Chapter 2).

Another element of our discussion below is that transformation is experienced both by the teachers who are participants in a non-positional teacher leadership programme and their colleagues. Each of these aspirant change agents designs a project in which they engage with colleagues to develop new or improved practice and ensure that it becomes embedded in the routines of the school. Those colleagues may be few, perhaps just the one, two or three who had been persuaded to collaborate with the change agent, but could be a much larger group. Sometimes, the entire school staff may be directly influenced by their development project. The extent of the influence depends on the design of the individual's project, of course, and we know from the feedback from facilitators that some teachers are more readily inclined to focus on their own practice rather than rise to the challenge of collaborating with colleagues. Facilitators use workshop activities that are designed to nudge participants to take steps to maximise the impact of their project by drawing colleagues into collaboration and adopting a variety of dissemination strategies to spread knowledge about the outcome of the project throughout the school.

The dimensions of teacher transformation are considered below under the following headings:

- skills and practical know-how
- knowledge and understanding
- dispositions
- professionality and leadership capacity

Skills and practical know-how

Teachers' development work often begins with a concern or a problem and it is almost always one of fairness or justice. Typically, a student, or particular

group of students, has difficulty understanding what the others seem to understand or is apparently disengaged from the learning process. A teacher is likely to be concerned and curious. Perhaps there is an underlying disadvantage. They will try to think of how the obstacle to learning can be overcome. An imaginative solution to the problem may be just the start of a sustained development process.

To illustrate, participating teachers have developed skills and know-how in relation to independent learning. For example, Liz, a teacher in a secondary school in Hertfordshire, talked to the students in her tutorial group (home group) about their attitudes to homework. She experimented with a range of different approaches, such as mapping all the lessons that she had planned and asking the students to annotate the map with their own suggestions about homework tasks (Brown, 2007). This was a breakthrough innovation for this teacher which had a transformative effect on the students' attitude to what became known as 'independent learning'.

Knowledge and understanding

While one aspect of programmes of support for non-positional teacher leadership is the encouragement to consult educational literature, this is quite problematic for busy teachers and, in many countries, access to books, articles and reports is very limited. It is clear, however, that once teachers embark on a process of developing an aspect of practice, they tend to adopt a mode of inquiry which is driven by the need to listen to their students. For example, Sebnem, a primary school teacher in Istanbul, consulted her students about their experience of learning in her class. She followed this up with some reading about how to create a collaborative ethos in the classroom and subsequently adopted a 'no-grades policy' so that feedback to her students was perceived to be informative rather than judgemental. She also collaborated with colleagues and parents. These experiences enabled Sebnem to develop her own pedagogical understanding as well as drawing students, colleagues and parents into discourse (Yetke, 2014).

In another example, Richard, a design and technology teacher in a secondary school in Hertfordshire, had read Shirley Clarke's book about 'formative assessment' (2005). Over a period of a few months, he experimented with the use of peer-group assessment and self-assessment techniques. He learned that students found verbal feedback from their peers was of most value but only when there was a strong sense of community within a class.

> Good relationships make possible the regular provision of oral feedback between peers, generating a climate in which students are not afraid to make mistakes and feel confident to build on errors and thereby improve both their learning and self-esteem.
>
> *(Cave, 2006)*

In 2010, we had begun to work with colleagues in the Western Balkans in the previously mentioned International Teacher Leadership project. Some of these colleagues were also involved in the APREME project already mentioned in Chapter 1. They asked us to collaborate so that our teacher leadership methodology could be used to empower teachers who wanted to develop ways to include the ethnic minorities in schools in the Western Balkans. In each of the participating countries, teachers volunteered to join support groups and develop a range of innovative projects, many of which focused on Roma communities. Across this initiative it became clear that outreach strategies were the key to addressing the inclusion challenge. This is exemplified in the following comment about one of the teachers' projects.

> In this project teachers did not simply wait for Roma parents to come to the school but went out into the community to provide information about educational entitlement. By doing this they showed respect and developed their understanding of the circumstances that discourage minority families from coming to the school regularly. In Serbia it is not unusual to find that Roma parents are blamed for their children's underachievement and dropping out. The assumption is that they are not interested in their children's education (Macura-Milovanović & Peček, 2012). In the APREME project the dominant prejudices toward Roma parents were deconstructed and challenged.
>
> *(Vranješević & Frost, 2016: 75)*

The examples above are from quite different contexts but what they have in common is a process of knowledge creation in which teachers' values and moral purpose lead to action. In the APREME project, a team of academics and NGO staff provided a framework of support for the teachers using the methodology we presented in Chapter 5. Insights were accumulated through networking and, along with a rich package of practical strategies, were curated and documented to inform future practice.

Dispositions

In previous chapters, we discuss the relationship between agency, self-efficacy and morale. When teachers feel empowered and are enabled to lead, they tend to experience very positive feelings. Those who have participated in non-positional teacher leadership programmes report considerable impact on their dispositions. When discussing their feelings, some said that the experience of leading change 're-ignited my passion for teaching'. A teacher in Serbia said:

> For the first time in the past 20 years, I am proud to be a teacher. I realized something that I have forgotten—how important is the job I am doing.
>
> *(Vranješević & Frost, 2016: 76)*

When we worked with colleagues at proMENTE Social Research, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to provide a non-positional teacher leadership programme, their report included a comment made by a teacher:

> I caught myself participating in discussions with all my heart, getting excited about (dialogue) between colleagues from our school and the colleagues from Hrasno. Exchanging ideas, listening to each other with respect, giving support to each other, one gets tremendous self-esteem, and that is all I need. So, I managed to go beyond the limits of my previous work, I set my goals on a higher level. Having seen the results of what I initiated in cooperation with my colleagues, I am encouraged to make new ways to continue something that improves the quality of work with children, which encourages me personally, thereby making me happier. (Teacher quoted in Bosnia and Herzegovina Final Report)
>
> *(Frost, 2011: 24)*

In the extract above, we see the connection between interactive knowledge building, teachers' wellbeing and moral purpose. We see here the powerful effect of empowering teachers which has the potential to address the need for improvements in schools' effectiveness and the teacher retention issue. This teacher, working in a divided post-conflict context, is clearly feeling positively disposed to change in general and networking in particular. We have seen such dispositions manifest in non-positional teacher leadership in a wide range of contexts, including Kazakhstan, as illustrated by a comment from a participating teacher:

> You experience a wonderful feeling of self-worth when you have an opportunity to identify your own problem that has been bothering you for a long time. (Participant 2)
>
> *(Qanay & Frost, 2023)*

In the teacher's comment quoted above, the freedom to turn your concerns into an agenda for change is emotionally rewarding.

In Chapter 3, we discussed the idea of teacher resistance to change and argued that the problem arises not from change itself but when teachers experience change which is imposed from above by governments. Our experience is that teachers who are enabled to lead change come to realise that, while complaining can be dispiriting, taking ownership of problems and seizing the initiative can be transformative, as illustrated by this comment from a teacher who participated in a non-positional teacher leadership programme in Cairo.

> Joining the programme changed the way I look at problems that face me. Now I think about the ways that I can strategically plan to solve these problems, rather than just complaining. I regret that I did not do the same before. (Participant G)
>
> *(Eltemamy, 2018: 143)*

Professionality and leadership capacity

When non-positional teacher leadership works well, participants report changes in the way they see their professionality, a concept we explain in Chapter 2. Extended professionality is characterised by being concerned with moral purpose, social justice and a commitment to develop practice which is highlighted in the case of the teacher in Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned above (Frost, 2019). Many participants have also reported a significant change in their view of their own capacity for leadership. The extract below is from a teacher, Danielle, in conversation with the facilitator in the Teacher Led Development Work programme.

> My understanding of what a leader is has changed vastly during this programme. My initial thoughts were that leaders and managers were synonymous; that to lead on a subject you had to have some management responsibility. I now see that there is no link. Leaders can be anyone who has a passion and the knowledge to lead in an area. To be a leader doesn't mean you hold all the answers; it is the process that's important – the continuation of learning. (Danielle)
>
> *(Mylles, 2006)*

The aim of the programme in which Danielle was participating was not to prepare teachers for leadership positions, but to exercise leadership as part of their professionality, regardless of their status or position. However, many teachers, including Danielle, were subsequently appointed to senior leadership team posts in which they could support further teacher leadership.

A few years later, we launched the International Teacher Leadership initiative in Europe and the Western Balkans. Some of our university colleagues warned that the idea of non-positional teacher leadership may be at odds with the culture in places such as Moldova, a post-Soviet country in which conceptions of leadership were shaped by the heritage of highly centralised and bureaucratic systems (Silova, 2009b). There were still traces of this in Kazakhstan even though it gained independence in the early 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed, as illustrated by this teacher's comment:

> During the Soviet time we were given clear instructions on what we needed to do first, second and third. We are accustomed to completing those tasks.
>
> *(Qanay & Frost, 2020: 9)*

Our programme was nonetheless successful in Moldova, as illustrated by the example of a primary school teacher, Feodora Maican. She had been experimenting with ways to enable the children in her class to develop their creativity by editing and re-writing stories. She was able to influence practice throughout the school.

> In a staff meeting, she told her colleagues about the project; she asked for their opinions and invited them to collaborate. They agreed to use some of the

> activities she had designed. They would observe each other's lessons and reflect on the way these activities affected students' attitudes to learning. The teachers met to discuss what they had seen and it was clear that this way of learning could make students more sociable, creative and imaginative.
>
> *(Chiriac, 2014: 114)*

It is worth noting what Feodora says about the exercise of leadership. She did not decide in advance what she wanted others to do but instead she adopted a non-threatening, invitational approach (Purkey & Siegel, 2002). Asking colleagues for their opinions on our own work makes us vulnerable but is effective in drawing colleagues into collaboration.

Colleagues in the Western Balkans noted the impact of the teacher leadership programme on teachers' professionality when they reflected on their part in the International Teacher Leadership initiative.

> According to the teachers in our studies, the process of exercising leadership was transformative. Initially they doubted their own competence to lead and were intimidated by the assumption that leadership necessarily entails major change in the education system but gradually they came to understand the value of small-scale project work as illustrated by comments such as *Now I realise that I can make changes on a small scale that would still be valuable and appreciated* (Elementary School Teacher, Serbia).
>
> *(Teleshaliyev et al., 2019: 80)*

We argue that the key to the development of extended professionality which embraces the exercise of leadership is the nature of the support available to teachers who are willing to commit to becoming agents of change. Jack Woosey, a teacher in an 'all-through' (K-12) school, participated in a school-based non-positional teacher leadership programme. He developed the use of 'flipped learning' throughout the school. The programme was facilitated by one of the assistant headteachers, Lucy Miles. In an article co-authored by Jack and Lucy, it is clear that Jack was empowered by his participation in the programme.

> At the beginning … Jack saw himself as a very minor cog in the grand machine of his school … However, over the course of the programme, Jack started to feel more empowered about his role as a leader beyond his own classroom and as a more valued part of the school. He gained confidence after being able to engage colleagues from different departments to collaborate with him … His sense of professionality now included change agentry (Fullan, 1993a).
>
> *(Woosey & Miles, 2019: 123)*

Again, we see leadership actions which are invitational. Jack approaches colleagues in different subject departments and asks them to collaborate

with him. Such invitational approaches are not just the preserve of teachers when they exercise leadership. While it may be true that those without the authority and power derived from a formal position can only float ideas, make requests and invite others to collaborate with them, we suggest that those in formal positions are also likely to find such invitational approaches efficacious.

Part II – Practice transformation

In previous chapters, we set out our arguments for teacher-led change and, in Chapter 5, we offer a methodology that centres on enabling teachers to identify their own agendas for change and then to design and lead development projects. While a development project will focus on a particular aspect of practice, the potential for impact is wide-ranging. Non-positional teacher leadership can lead to the embedding of new and improved practice within the routines of the school because it draws others into collaboration. It can also change the professional culture and reconfigure teachers' conceptions of what it is to be a teacher. In this section, we aim to characterise teacher-led development projects and explore the variety of ways in which they operate.

Although the focus of teachers' development projects, chosen by them as individuals, is very varied, when we look at lists of project foci in different countries, we find a remarkable degree of commonality. Whether the non-positional teacher leadership programme is in the UK or a country with a quite different culture and system, we have found that the majority of teachers' projects are focused on aspects of pedagogy. Many of these are applicable across the curriculum rather than being limited to a particular subject. Typical project titles include:

Developing effective strategies to promote creativity and enhance learning across the curriculum

Developing a consistent cross-curricular approach to teaching numeracy skills

Developing the use of 'talk' to improve learning

In most parts of the world, teachers recognise that, although they must work within a mandated curriculum framework, there remains plenty of scope for the development of more generic pedagogical practices.

Teachers' projects often focus on what could be referred to as learning capacity (Claxton, 2007), which encompasses learning skills and dispositions towards learning. It also includes what some have called 'meta-learning' (Watkins, 2015) or learning about learning. Learning capacity is not just about how to be successful in school but has major implications for lifelong learning,

a term which has a range of meanings. It tends to be used by policy makers to refer to recurring vocational training (e.g. Department for Education, 2024b) but also to the provision of extramural education. A report about lifelong learning from UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (2020) began with an emblematic quotation from Alvin Toffler, the renowned author of *Future Shock*:

> The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.

Many teachers' projects are driven by a passionate commitment to enable their students to develop the capacity to learn that will sustain them not only through their schooling but throughout their lives.

Some projects focus on students' wellbeing, which includes many factors such as mental health, interpersonal relationships, nutrition and exercise. Data from the PISA exercise highlight that wellbeing is a key variable between countries and that there is a great deal that schools can do to improve students' well-being, with significant consequences for their happiness or satisfaction with life and their academic success (OECD, 2017). Teachers who have participated in non-positional teacher leadership programmes have designed and led projects with titles such as:

> *Developing strategies to promote self-regulation and responsibility in the classroom*
>
> *Combatting bullying through peer-mentoring*

We have also seen projects that address issues such as managing the transition from one stage of schooling to the next and enhancing the self-efficacy of students from disadvantaged communities and students with additional needs. Projects like these are clearly addressing matters of social justice.

A key feature of the methodology we set out in Chapter 5 is that each teacher is empowered to identify a problem or issue that they are particularly concerned about. However, our methodology has also been deployed in the context of collaborations with other initiatives that have originated from outside the school to address a particular issue. For example, the APREME (Advancing Participation and Representation of Ethnic Minority Groups in Education) project, introduced in Chapter 1, was a large-scale research and development initiative funded by the European Union and the Open Society Institute. It gathered data in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia to illuminate the disparity between families from ethnic groups and their involvement in the life of their children's schools. A report identified a range of obstacles to participation and representation (Frost, Nedelcu, Palade & Kosova Education Centre, 2010). This was a starting

point for an intervention based on the methodology of non-positional teacher leadership. Teachers in schools across the region were invited to participate and identify a particular aspect of practice that they could develop to contribute to reducing the barriers to involvement in schools on the part of ethnic minority families. Teachers designed and led their own projects, including one in which a teacher asked parents from different cultures to assist with the preparation and teaching of history lessons. Another teacher arranged ceramics workshops for children and their parents from Hungarian and Serbian communities. Another organised outreach meetings in a number of Roma settlements to meet parents and discuss the aims of the school and address parents' concerns (Vranješević & Frost, 2016).

Within the project outlined above, teachers were still able to identify a concern that was meaningful for them as individuals even though they were acting within an over-arching set of goals. Their agency and moral purpose were effectively mobilised. However, it is not clear from the available evidence whether or not these projects had a sustained effect on the routines and cultures of the schools involved. Some would argue that the more usual approach, which is to enable many teachers within a school to pursue their own agendas, is a serious obstacle to coherence regarding school improvement. However, while it may be problematic if a school attempts to implement several initiatives that have originated outside the school, teacher-initiated change can be coordinated to preserve coherence. As explained in Chapter 5, participants in non-positional teacher leadership groups are enabled to engage in consultation with colleagues about their concerns and project plans and school principals are encouraged to ensure that consultation results in harmonisation. It is often the case that teachers find that their concerns are already linked to organisational priorities.

Project leadership

The kind of development projects indicated above are invariably welcomed by school principals and those who advise and manage schools because they are seen as positive contributions to the development of practice. What is perhaps less obvious is how such projects actually operate. How do teachers lead development projects?

As we discuss in Chapter 4, leadership can be construed as a practice in which a range of behaviours and actions are deployed in order to set a direction and influence others. The question of whether or not the teacher has the authority to do this is not the most important consideration. What is more important is what the teacher actually does to manage the process so that change occurs. If authentic change is to occur, the change agent needs to manage a process of collaboration which extends over many months in order that practice can be developed iteratively. The following teacher's narrative

has been edited to try to illustrate and exemplify how teachers lead development projects.

BOX 6.1 HARMINDER'S STORY

I am a teacher of science in a secondary school in England and was concerned about how best to mark students' workbooks. I wondered if the feedback really helps them to improve their learning.

I emailed the Head of Science to request that the agenda for the next department meeting included a few minutes for me to explain my concern to everyone. At the meeting, I told colleagues that students did not seem to be using my feedback to improve their learning and asked if anyone else had noticed this. I offered the suggestion that the problem might be the poor quality of my feedback. Many colleagues were sympathetic and shared my concern. I asked colleagues to consider collaborating with me. Three colleagues volunteered so I suggested a short meeting over lunch. The Head of Department offered to pay for sandwiches out of the departmental budget.

At our first meeting, I outlined my thinking about a process of review and the trial of new approaches over the course of the following term. My proposals were welcomed enthusiastically so we committed ourselves to a series of lunchtime and after school meetings. As a way of reviewing our practice together I suggested that we all look through the books we had marked and make a list of the most common comments that we had written.

At our next meeting we shared our lists of recurring comments and discussed how useful we thought they had been. Our analysis was partly about the clarity of the comments and partly about any improvements in students' learning as a result. I made notes of our discussion and circulated a summary of our insights. We continued with this discussion over two meetings which enabled me to add to the notes and organise our ideas on paper.

I volunteered to categorise our recurring comments according to their purpose. When we had discussed and amended my categorisation, we devised a tool to gain feedback from students about the types of comments we typically make when we mark their assignments. I also found a few journal articles about assessment feedback and shared these for discussion at our next meeting. Then we devised a catalogue of the sorts of comments that would be more likely to help students to improve their learning. We agreed that we would use variations of these comments when we marked students' books and would ask students for feedback again. This enabled us to improve our catalogue of comments.

I prepared a presentation to enable us to share the story and outcomes of our project at the end of term department meeting. Our colleagues thanked us for our work and said that they would use our comment catalogue to help them improve their own feedback to students.

Harminder begins, not with a ready-made solution, but with a starting point for inquiry, dialogue and experiment. In the second paragraph of her story, we hear about her approach to her colleagues, which is one of humility and solicitation. At the same time, she is able to draw on the support of the Head of Department without being a threat to their position. When she meets with her three colleagues who had volunteered to work with her, she outlines a tentative plan of action and invites collaboration. The plan is clear enough to inspire confidence without being dictatorial. In paragraphs four and five we see 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 2002) at play when Harminder offers to take on the time-consuming tasks that will propel the project forward. This includes searching for some relevant literature – not a particularly academic exercise but a simple matter of finding possible sources of ideas. It is also noteworthy that the collective decisions to create a tool for the collection of student feedback and a catalogue of types of comments for use when writing feedback for students are ones which are efficient and fit with the intensity of teachers' work. In the final paragraph of Harminder's story, we see how she and her colleagues are seeking to extend the impact of the project and embed the practice across all science lessons.

Projects vary in terms of their scope and the elements in the process. Some projects begin with a very clear action plan, complete with targets tied to specific timelines, and most teachers learn that to maximise collaboration, the change agent needs to be responsive and adaptive. Action plans are very helpful in enabling the change agent to imagine the direction of a project and prepare contingent actions that could take the project forward, but collaboration is of the utmost value which means that, as Michael Fullan once said, strategic planning comes later (1993b).

The management of a process of collaboration is key to a successful development project for several reasons. Firstly, collaboration is a source of creative thinking because not only are there more minds engaged on the problem, but the interaction and dialogue challenge and stretch everyone's thinking. The sum is always greater than the parts. Secondly, collaboration builds professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) by strengthening the bonds between colleagues, enhancing levels of trust and normalising pedagogical dialogue. Thirdly, collaboration makes it more likely that the new or improved practice will become embedded in the routines of the school and therefore be sustained. This contrasts with the type of teachers' projects which are entirely focused on the teacher's own practice and professional learning. Such projects may well be of benefit to the individual but there is little lasting benefit to the school.

Part III – School transformation

Set out in Chapter 5 is an approach to support for non-positional teacher leadership which empowers and enables individual teachers. A criticism that may arise is that while those participating may experience valuable transformation, it is difficult for their schools as institutions to benefit. When members of staff

participate in teacher development programmes of any kind, senior school leaders need strategies that at the very least ensure that the individual's learning is disseminated within the school. Beyond that, school principals might reasonably expect that the teacher's classroom practice will be improved. However, the approach to non-positional teacher leadership we present in Chapter 5 aims higher. As we have illustrated in Part II above, non-positional teacher leadership programmes entail the development of practice through collaborative processes that improve the practice of many in the school. In addition, we have evidence to show that such programmes can also have a significant impact on the school as an organisation. Many teachers' projects have resulted in new procedures and organisational structures or making a difference to the professional culture in the school.

Organisational structures and procedures

Schools, like most organisations, have a system of roles of responsibility to try to ensure that essential tasks are undertaken; these are invariably connected by lines of reporting and accountability. In some countries, organisational structures are determined centrally but, as we argue in Chapter 4, where school principals enjoy a degree of autonomy, they are able to adopt transformational leadership strategies which include creating new roles and shaping the staff structure so that it serves the school's goals more effectively. Common features of organisational life include the routines (Becker, 2004) and procedures that are automatically used in the operation of the school. A common example would be registering each student's attendance at the start of the day.

Sometimes, teachers' development projects lead to new organisational structures or procedures. An example from the 1990s arose from the work of a teacher, Gloria Rylatt, at a secondary school in Kent to address the discontinuity between the pastoral and academic dimensions of the school's provision for post-16 students. One of the concrete outcomes of this work was that the school instituted a system in which students were entitled to at least two one-to-one tutorials to review their learning and support their progress (Holden, 2002). Another, more recent example is from the Palestinian city of Ramallah, where a teacher participating in a non-positional teacher leadership programme (Daoud & Ramahi, 2017) designed and led a project to improve the quality of relationships between students. Rana Daoud taught in the primary sector of the school and as a homeroom tutor, she observed levels of aggression, rudeness and disharmony that she realised would disrupt learning throughout the school day. She consulted colleagues and devised a tool to collect the views of students. At the core of her project was collaboration with colleagues to produce a teachers' guide to dealing with problematic student behaviour. She also worked with her students in very innovative ways. For example, she enabled them to make short videos portraying aggressive behaviour and how to respond in ways that would diffuse the situation. These are just a few examples of the many

tools and processes that Rana and her colleagues devised which were brought together to form the basis of a new policy for managing student behaviour. The senior leadership team also decided to create a new post of responsibility for Rana in which she would coordinate activities under this policy.

The professional culture

In Chapter 4, we argue that culture building is central to the transformative leadership approach that some school principals have embraced. As a concept, culture resonates with 'professional capital' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) in that both are about the values and norms that can improve a school's effectiveness. Many school principals and their senior leadership colleagues act strategically to cultivate positive professional cultures. They might for example organise whole-school staff development events and ask teachers to discuss values and the school's mission or they might rearrange spaces in the school building to allow or encourage staff teams to work more collaboratively. These are just two examples of the many ways in which senior leaders seek to cultivate positive professional cultures.

Some principals have discovered that having a successful non-positional teacher leadership programme in their schools can make a significant contribution to culture building. A good example of this was the case of the Sir John Lawes School (SJL) in Hertfordshire, England, where, in 2004, the senior leadership team chose to launch the 'Teacher Led Development Work' programme. The title was taken from that of a guidance book published the year before (Frost & Durrant, 2003). It was the school's initiative to do this having read about an earlier version of the programme running in a different part of the country (Frost et al., 2000). They saw their association with the HertsCam Network as part of a wider set of strategies aimed at building a collaborative culture (Mylles, 2017). The culture that the senior leadership team skilfully cultivated at Sir John Lawes created conditions that were particularly conducive to non-positional teacher leadership. They also ensured that the programme became part of that cultivation, promoting shared leadership, inquiry and dialogue. Further, they ensured that the impact of participating teachers' projects was maximised. They did this partly through the deliberate and systematic application of 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 2002), as illustrated below in the comment by Jo Mylles, a member of the senior leadership team at SJL.

> Our senior leadership team often work alongside teachers with their projects as team members rather than leading the projects themselves. When teachers come to the leadership team we ask: how can we help? what resources do you need? rather than directing them towards a particular outcome.
>
> *(Mylles, 2017: 108)*

In addition, teachers participating in the programme were routinely invited, two or three at a time, to join the senior leadership team for a lunchtime meeting at

which they could talk about their projects and benefit from questions and suggestions. This level of support enabled participants, whether they were experienced or new to the profession, to make significant contributions to the development of the school. The headteacher (school principal) wrote about a newly qualified teacher, Tom Murphy, who courageously designed a project which involved students in his science lessons electing to teach portions of the lesson. Tom helped them with their preparation and, when they taught, he operated a video camera so that he could meet with the students later on to review the student-led lessons. The principal wrote about this in HertsCam Voice, the network's newsletter.

> Some of the projects have had a profound and lasting influence on the school community. For example, Tom Murphy, a relatively inexperienced teacher, developed a project around student-led learning in the classroom in 2005 which he shared with all staff at the annual conference that year alongside students from the class. This became a whole school priority, and we now have a rich and diverse student voice at our school. Initiatives include a Junior Leadership Team who discuss teaching and learning issues and present to the leadership team regularly on what they see as priorities for the school; a team of student observers who take part in faculty reviews, observing and feeding back to teachers; students who run an 'eco team' which actively holds us all to account over our energy use. … I doubt if this work would have evolved without Tom opening the door for us all and giving us a glimpse of what was possible.
>
> *(Robins, 2011: 3)*

Our understanding of the link between senior leaders' strategy and the non-positional teacher leadership programme evolved over time. In the 1990s, senior leaders were keen to maximise the school improvement effect but the idea of contributing to culture building emerged for us a little later. Our research told us that school principals can choose to 'build a culture conducive to teacher-led development work' (Frost & Durrant, 2004: 315) but the reciprocal effect that teacher leadership can have on the school's professional culture became much clearer for us subsequently, as illustrated below.

The tools we created based on the categories in our 'impact framework' (Frost & Durrant, 2002) enabled us to help teachers become more aware of how their development work made a difference to the school culture, as illustrated by the comment below from a participant in the programme we helped to establish in Cairo.

> Before TLDW, every department was a separate island of its own, now the ideas are shared all over the place. (Participant O, one-to-one tutorials)
>
> *(Eltemamy, 2018:15)*

Similarly, the Teacher Leadership in Kazakhstan programme indicated that, even in a system in which the structure of the school as an organisation may be

determined by the central authorities, there remains scope for teachers' development work to impact on the professional culture. The following comment highlights the growth in social capital.

> I meet with colleagues to get their advice or exchange ideas …. we became much closer to each other. We used to rush somewhere whether it was breaks or staff meetings. But this programme brought us together. There are 25 people involved in this project and we all get together very well. We now treat each other differently … (Participant 3).
>
> *(Qanay & Frost, 2020:11)*

Overall, we are confident that non-positional teacher leadership, especially when the group of programme participants constitute a critical mass within a school, can have significant impact on schools as organisations. However, for schools to really reap the benefits, there needs to be an effective mutuality between teacher leadership and the transformational leadership exercised by school principals and their senior leadership team colleagues, as exemplified in the case of the Sir John Lawes school discussed above. This idea has been called conjoint agency (see Durrant, 2020) and was expressed very well by a team who had conducted research in Australia in the 1990s. They used the term 'parallel leadership' which they said:

> encourages a relatedness between teacher leaders and administrator leaders that activates and sustains the knowledge generating capacity of schools … a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity.
>
> *(Crowther et al., 2002)*

Their use of the term 'teacher leaders' points to their focus on particular individuals who are identified as having responsibility for particular areas of the school's provision. Our interest, in comparison, is with any teacher, including those who may have no position of responsibility and those who have support roles such as Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Assistants, School Librarians and so on.

The transformational effect discussed above focuses on teachers, both those participating directly and those who are drawn into participants' development projects, the development of new and improved practice and the school as an organisation. We now focus on transformation beyond the school through working with the community, networking with teachers in other schools and by engaging in activism and advocacy for teacher leadership.

Part IV – Transformation beyond the school

The approach to support for non-positional teacher leadership set out in Chapter 5 was developed over several decades. At the start of the journey, we had no expectation that the participating teachers would be influential beyond

their own classrooms. Over time it became apparent that not only can teachers become influential throughout the school, but they can also contribute to the development of professional knowledge within whatever system their school belongs to, and even internationally. We also learned that they could become effective advocates for non-positional teacher leadership. Usually, the first experience of influencing beyond the school is when teachers are invited to participate in an event organised by facilitators to enable programme participants to engage in networking.

Community outreach

In a few cases, teachers have sought to engage the community that surrounds their school. Marie Metcalfe, for example, led a project in which she wanted to raise awareness of the 29 languages spoken in her primary school. She devised strategies such as 'Language of the Month' where a language is chosen and then there is a whole school assembly where speakers of that language are asked to present some words and images. The children's families are invited to come to the school and contribute to a display about their culture and language, and coffee mornings helped parents to feel at home in the school. These activities helped children and their families to feel more valued, increasing a sense of belonging and self-esteem (Metcalfe, 2014).

Another good example occurred under the umbrella of the APREME project mentioned above.

> Jelena is a young elementary school teacher who works in a satellite classroom in a village where the majority of students are Roma. She's been receiving complaints from parents from the village that their children do not have a proper school yard and they felt discriminated against because the main school has a very well-equipped school yard. She talked to the school principal about this problem and together they decided to do something about it. They talked to parents and discovered that the main motivation behind the request they made was a desire for their children to spend some quality leisure time because this rural area is lacking activities designed for children and youth (and this creates bigger problems, such as violence, alcohol and drugs abuse, etc.). They understood parents' fears and told them that the school would be willing to make a school yard, but they needed help from parents with such things as cutting the grass, cleaning the field, painting sports equipment and so on. Parents volunteered to help, so the joint action for building the school yard began with a collaboration between teachers, students and parents. During this process Jelena and the school principal thought about how to use the school yard effectively; they suggested joint activities for parents and their children. This would provide opportunities for them to spend some quality time together and would strengthen parent-school

> cooperation. During the opening day of the school yard, sports games were organised; parents were both organisers and participants in sports games together with their children and teachers.
>
> *(Frost, 2012a: 172)*

Knowledge building through networking

Because of the nature of the work, teachers rarely interact with teachers from other schools. Their time is largely taken up with a daily schedule of lessons, and at the end of the teaching day there may be routine meetings and the need to prepare for the teaching to come. The much-documented intensity of work makes interaction beyond the confines of teachers' schools increasingly difficult (Creagh et al., 2023; Felstead, Green & Huxley, 2023). This is very unfortunate since we know how valuable networking can be for teachers. It may be assumed that the main benefit is picking up new teaching techniques but our experience in relation to programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership is that the gains can be richer and more complex than this. Of course, techniques and tips will be passed on whenever teachers come together and talk about their practice. Feedback gathered as teachers leave a network event typically includes comments such as 'Many great ideas, will use in lessons soon'.

However, if opportunities for networking are well-organised, the experience can be more profound than exchanging tips for teaching (Anderson et al., 2014). In Chapter 5, we touched on networking as one of the key strategies for supporting non-positional teacher leadership and emphasised the dialogic knowledge building that is the core purpose of such activities. Here knowledge is not construed as a fixed commodity but as something more fluid which takes shape as teachers share their stories and others offer their critical perspectives and comparisons with their own experiences. Where network events recur frequently within a particular consortium or network of schools, we can discern what we could construe as a continuous conversation which is enriched and extended at every gathering. This depends on the event being designed so that all participants are able to share their own experience, voice their narratives and engage in dialogue. Preparations for such events include workshop activities that enable teachers to plan how they would like to participate. They might choose, for example, to make a poster and think about how to use this to draw colleagues into discussion. They might plan to lead a workshop in which they give a brief account of their project and provide an activity designed to enable workshop participants to engage in discussion about it. Crucially, participants need to be enabled to engage in critical discussion within an environment where they feel safe, not only to share their vulnerabilities, but also to offer each other 'critical friendship'. Through networking, all the teachers concerned are contributing to the stock of professional knowledge within the school system.

Another aspect of networking is the inspirational dimension which involves a mutual strengthening of moral purpose. Every teacher's story about their attempts to address a concern reminds listeners about their own moral purpose. For example, an elementary teacher in Bulgaria told a gathering of colleagues about her school having to admit a small group of Roma children. The teacher was shocked to discover that these children had not received basic education even though they had supposedly been attending schools for several years. To her, this was an injustice arising from prejudice against Roma people. She and her colleagues created a special provision to urgently remedy the situation. Colleagues at the gathering were moved when they heard this story; they shared the teacher's indignation and the discussion that followed showed that the story had prompted them to reflect on other educational injustices (Frost, 2012b). This story clearly illustrates how moral purpose can be contagious.

Networking also plays an important role in teachers' identification in the sense that when teachers meet like-minded colleagues at network events, they express a sense of common cause. Hearing each other's stories enables them to experience collective self-efficacy arising from a process of mutual socialisation (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). In the support materials linked to this book this idea is expressed in the phrase 'we are the sort of people who can achieve this sort of thing' (Frost, 2025b).

Network events present opportunities for teachers to meet those from other schools who may wish to collaborate, and some event organisers have suggested to participants that they should exchange email addresses when this occurs. Sometimes, this leads to inter-school collaboration. For example, Janet Ollerenshaw, a secondary school teacher in Barnwell School in Hertfordshire, UK, worked with a colleague in a school in a neighbouring town to develop the use of learning journals which, drawing on various self-esteem assessment tools, were structured to help students with self-esteem issues.

> Our journal would focus on encouraging students to recognise their capabilities, counteracting negativity and helping them to take responsibility for developing their positivity. I drew on ideas gleaned from a number of self-esteem assessment tools.
>
> *(Ollerenshaw, 2007: 29)*

The approach to organising network events promoted in the HertsCam Network has influenced partners in many countries to organise their own. In Kazakhstan, for example, network events in the context of the Teacher Leadership in Kazakhstan (TLK) project were powerful (Qanay et al., 2023). The comment below was one of many which indicated that contact with teachers in other schools was a welcome innovation.

> I was able to make contacts with the teachers from Yntymaq School …. They provided feedback, shared new ideas and encouraged me. I left the

> event motivated and enthusiastic to integrate new ideas into my project (Gulim's reflection, Birlik School).
>
> *(Qanay & Frost, 2020: 9)*

In 2019–20, there were network events in the four major cities of Astana, Almaty, Taraz and Kokshetau. Gatherings in a large country such as Kazakhstan present organisers with many challenges, especially regarding travel. Participants often have to give a lot of their personal time to the enterprise. This was also true in the case of an event in Bucharest, which brought together teachers and facilitators from two regions of Romania (Iaşi and Bucharest) and from various parts of the Republic of Moldova where the Romanian language is spoken (Chiriac, 2014). The event was held in a hotel over three days and for some of the participants it involved an eight-hour drive. Events such as these were exciting and memorable but, arguably, unsustainable.

Within the HertsCam Network in England, we developed a sustainable programme of networking in which events were low-cost and involved minimal disruption both to the operation of the school and the teachers' time (Anderson et al., 2014). Events were held throughout the academic year, usually five or six events annually, and usually at the end of the teaching day between 5 and 6.30 pm. They were very brief and necessarily efficient. We learned that it is possible to fit in a plenary session, a gallery walk or poster session and two parallel workshop sessions within the space of 90 minutes.

In 2020, we learned, like everyone else, how to conduct such events online. This enabled everyone to keep the conversation going, but such events were not as powerful because of the absence of the informal conversation over a cup of tea. However, migrating to the online mode opened up the possibility of international networking which enabled teachers from countries as diverse as Egypt, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and the UK to participate. Overcoming the language barrier has been a challenge because it normally involves expert translators, which is expensive. However, with the help of a few bilingual colleagues, communication is possible.

Activism and advocacy

Many teachers who have participated in non-positional teacher leadership programmes have wanted to extend their influence by advocating for teacher leadership and enabling others to follow in their footsteps. Having become empowered and felt the advantage of their enhanced agency themselves, they took action, initially by taking on the role of facilitator in their schools. Some of these subsequently supported novice facilitators in other schools and played important roles as part of the management of their network of schools. This seems to fit with the notion of 'activist professionalism' put forward by Judyth Sachs.

> For teachers, activist professionalism means reinventing their professional identity and redefining themselves as teachers within their own schools and the wider education community. It means that they rethink their social relationships and pedagogical practices within and outside of schools.
>
> *(Sachs, 2000: 92)*

In using the term activist, we are not suggesting that teachers need to engage in political campaigning. We are arguing however that the growth of support for non-positional teacher leadership depends on teachers themselves becoming activists by speaking up for it and taking up the opportunity to contribute to the provision of support, whether that be as a facilitator, organiser of a network event, senior school leader or coordinator of a network of schools. One member of the HertsCam Network spoke about her 'journey of empowerment' when she appeared as part of a team who made a presentation at a GPE/KIX webinar, followed by a blog post (Frost & Qanay, 2021). Diane gave an account of having been a participant in her school's 'Teacher Led Development Work' group and later becoming a facilitator and a member of the teaching team on the network's own masters programme which was based on the non-positional teacher leadership approach.

Many years before that, teachers from schools within the HertsCam Network had travelled to places including Corinth (Greece), Belgrade (Serbia), Ohrid (Macedonia), Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria) and Braga (Portugal) to share their experience and run workshops to enable staff from NGOs and universities to design and launch their own programmes (Frost, 2011). This sort of activity continued, enabling programmes to be formed in Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia and Palestine. In 2019, a team from the HertsCam Network travelled to Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, to work with partner organisations there to launch a programme which extended across the whole country (Qanay et al., 2023). The most recent launch was in January 2024, when a HertsCam team ran induction workshops in Almaty, Kazakhstan's second city, for school principals and facilitators who were key players in UNESCO's Remote and Rural Schools project.

It would be foolishly grandiose to suggest that these international collaborations were transforming policy and practice across the world, but they have made a significant contribution to the discourse about teacher and school development. They have arguably set in train practices that may multiply and grow because of the empowering experiences that many teachers have enjoyed. Some have also claimed that non-positional teacher leadership has some impact on society. For example, in the Western Balkans, colleagues warmly welcomed what they saw as a programme that promotes democratic values. Colleagues in the Middle East echoed this and talked about its contribution to social construction in post-revolution Egypt (Eltemamy, 2019) and emancipation in occupied Palestine (Ramahi, 2019). In a school in Ramallah, teachers who had been enabled to exercise leadership demonstrated growing consciousness about the social context of their emerging professionality, as illustrated in the comment by one of the participants below.

> Our society doesn't allow us to think on our own or express our individual thoughts … [but now] I'm going to solve the problem, I'm the owner of the idea and the solution … it contradicts the local environment … (Munir, secondary level teacher)
>
> *(Ramahi, 2019: 32)*

There were many such comments which led to the conclusion that empowering teachers and enabling them to develop critical consciousness in relation to what is happening within their schools could lead to the development of a Palestinian narrative about education. This, Ramahi argues, is essential because of the way historical oppression and colonial interference has created obstacles to change and improvement (Ramahi, 2019).

Conclusion

In the account presented above we have explored four dimensions of the transformative effects of non-positional teacher leadership: teacher transformation, practice transformation, school transformation and transformation beyond the school. There are undoubtedly many more kinds of impact that are impossible to track. We do not claim that all of these effects will inevitably be the case or always the case. Neither have we tried to quantify the extent to which they have been experienced. However, what we have been able to do is illustrate and exemplify a range of different effects in such a way that demonstrates what is possible. The question of how such effects could be made more reliable and the question of how support for non-positional teacher leadership could be taken to scale are discussed in the next chapter.

7

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR TEACHER-LED CHANGE

What we propose in this book is clearly radical and presents a formidable challenge. The approach is an alternative to change imposed from above which undermines teachers' agency by casting them as implementers of change designed by others and fails to recognise their capacity to lead change. We are aware that our proposals run counter to dominant patterns of policy and practice around the world. Nevertheless, we have demonstrated in Chapter 6 that it is actually possible to empower and enable teachers as agents of change in a range of quite different cultural environments. Furthermore, we argue that in the light of the consistent failure of the usual approaches to education reform, it is also imperative. We have demonstrated that it is possible to sustain programmes of support for non-positional teacher leadership by mobilising the moral purpose, skill and agency of experienced teachers who take on the role of facilitator. This is key, in that it shows how the required expertise and energy can be found within the teaching profession itself, rather than being dependent on staff who belong to organisations external to schools, whether they be universities, local government or civil society organisations.

Going to scale?

Sceptics may point out that, so far, the evidence shows that our approach to cultivating non-positional teacher leadership has thrived only in small pockets and for limited periods of time. A thorough analysis of the policy climate, cultural environment and the pattern of established practice in education systems around the world suggests that the capacity to take this practice to scale simply does not exist. Our analysis in Chapters 1–3 illustrates a range of obstacles to scaling up, including the way governments try to regulate teachers' professional standards, the way systems of high-stakes testing have a narrowing effect on

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pedagogy, the way international rivalry and policy borrowing can distort the change process, the way top-down policy mandates can undermine teachers' moral purpose, morale and wellbeing and the way traditional hierarchical assumptions about the nature of leadership can undermine teachers' belief that they can make a difference. Yes, the obstacles are formidable.

Some enthusiasts for non-positional teacher leadership programmes may be reluctant to argue for scaling up. They may value their participation in such programmes precisely because they see them as being alternative to the mainstream. They may fear that scaling up is likely to mean a takeover by government authorities with all that implies about regulation, standardisation and design by those deemed by government to be experts. There is considerable appeal in feeling that you are acting outside the mainstream and therefore not entirely complicit in the most negative aspects of top-down policies.

The assumption that the success of an innovation is measured in the extent to which it has been or could be scaled up is now being questioned (Naranjo Bautista, 2019). McLean and Gargani say that 'Social impact is not synonymous with growth, and more is not always better' (2019: 9). They urge readers to consider whether scaling up is necessarily justified and they introduce the concept of 'optimal scale', in which there is a balance between magnitude, variety, sustainability and the type of impacts that stakeholders endorse. They also call for coordination in the process of scaling up.

> Scaling for impact depends on many [people]. They may be partners working collaboratively, rivals pushing each other competitively, or stakeholders advocating collectively. They may vary in their interests and values, and be motivated by a mix of altruistic and selfish purposes. This messy web of actors poses challenges that may be overcome by focusing on how we 'coordinate' the scaling effort, which encompasses more than the word may first imply.
>
> *(McLean & Gargani, 2019: 66)*

Arguably, scaling up is most likely to work when there is a stable and sustained pilot. However, although we have helped to initiate programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership in many different countries and contexts, stability and sustainability have been elusive. Sources of funding are typically time-bounded, personnel changes occur and even the most ardent advocates are obliged, because of their employment, to shift their attention to something else.

We are not suggesting that programmes of the kind we propose in this book could be scaled up through attempts to replicate or implement them across whole systems. Perhaps it is more viable to consider something that is more related to what McLean & Gargani (2019) call 'scaling impact'. What could be scaled up are the conditions in which support for non-positional teacher leadership could thrive. This would require a different mind-set on the part of policy makers, of course, as well as proactive decisions by school principals and system leaders.

Sustaining support for non-positional teacher leadership

The best example of a sustained programme in our experience is one founded in a secondary school in Hertfordshire in 2004. This, as we mentioned in Chapter 5, was the initiative of Jo Mylles, a member of the senior leadership team at Sir John Lawes School in Hertfordshire. She asked David Frost, who led the masters programme in which Jo was a participant, to work with her to create a school-based programme which took its name from a book, *Teacher Led Development Work* (TLDW), published the year before (Frost & Durrant, 2003). Jo and David acted as co-facilitators and the teachers were awarded a Certificate of Further Professional Studies by the University of Cambridge. This initiative was rapidly replicated in many schools in the region, which led ultimately to the formation of a network, HertsCam. This grew out of a collaboration between a local education authority – Hertfordshire Education Services – and the university. This arrangement could not be sustained because government funding relied upon by local education authorities was diverted to other initiatives. So, in 2012, the HertsCam Network became an independent charity with a Board of Trustees consisting mainly of school principals. The HertsCam Network was sustained as a charity for over 20 years and was able to support non-positional teacher leadership programmes in more than a hundred schools in southern England, Northumberland and Northern Ireland. There are four reasons for this success: regenerative facilitation, intellectual leadership, schools' budgetary autonomy and administrative support.

First, the term regenerative facilitation is used to indicate that, when the facilitation of a school-based group works well, some of those who have participated as group members will subsequently take on the role of facilitator. Sir John Lawes School led the way in this regard. In the second year of the programme at that school, David Frost withdrew and one of the members of the first group, Maria Santos Richmond, became a co-facilitator alongside Jo Mylles. In the third year, Maria was lead facilitator and she invited a colleague who had been a member of the second group to join her as co-facilitator. This process of regeneration continued for 20 years and became a model for most of the schools in the HertsCam Network. It established the principle that experienced teachers within the school can become effective facilitators and that they can induct other experienced colleagues into the role, leading to continuity of provision. As we explained in Chapter 1, this is essential if the potential that lies within the profession for supporting non-positional teacher leadership is to be fully realised. Those who took on the role of facilitator did so, not for further remuneration or time off from their other duties, but because they believed that empowering and enabling their colleagues to innovate and lead change is an effective school improvement strategy which would improve the quality of students' learning. The moral purpose which drives teachers to become part of an NPTL group also drives facilitators, who are usually highly committed to improving the effectiveness of their schools.

Val Hill instigated a programme to support non-positional teacher leadership at her secondary school when she was appointed to a post with the responsibility to lead the improvement of teaching and learning throughout the school.

> It has become clear to me that merely looking at operational changes at a teaching and learning level would lead to limited improvement. What is needed is a cultural change which encourages each member of the learning community to see themselves as both leaders and learners. One way is through increasing opportunities for individuals to exercise their leadership potential and agency.
>
> *(Hill, 2008: 5)*

Val Hill's decision was typical of senior leaders who chose to initiate NPTL programmes. In our experience, members of senior leadership teams look for strategies that will help to improve the quality of teaching and learning and many of them conclude that a programme to support non-positional teacher leadership will help them to achieve their strategic goals.

Second, intellectual leadership in the first instance came from David Frost and the publications that he had produced in collaboration with a small number of colleagues (e.g. Frost et al., 2000; Frost & Durrant, 2002, 2003). Subsequently, a part-time masters programme for teachers in Hertfordshire, led by David Frost, became a site of discussion and critical exploration of concepts such as school improvement, human agency, leadership for learning and much more (Frost et al., 2018; Woods, Roberts & Chivers, 2016). Through their participation in this programme, many teachers not only became confident and capable as facilitators of school-based programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership but also became very successful as members of the teaching team for the masters programme. Some of these scholar practitioners went on to achieve doctoral degrees (e.g. Creaby, 2016; Lightfoot, 2019; Herbert, 2018) and became part of a wider group of doctoral scholars which included others from countries such as Egypt, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Palestine. Many facilitators have also become school principals.

Third, another important factor in sustaining the programme in Hertfordshire is the schools' control of their budgets. Since 1990, headteachers/principals in England have enjoyed the freedom to make decisions about expenditure within their schools. The very first programme to support non-positional teacher leadership, which began in 1990, was funded by the school (Frost, 1995). When the first HertsCam programme began, school principals had the freedom to decide to pay fees to the university and later on, when the network became an independent registered charity, fees were charged directly by HertsCam. The principals who sat on HertsCam's Board of Trustees made decisions about the level of these fees which were calculated to be affordable to schools and to create an adequate revenue stream to maintain HertsCam as an organisation.

Fourth, as a charity, HertsCam had the legal obligation to spend money for the public good. Thus, it could pay for administrative support for a team of volunteers who could:

- provide induction programmes for facilitators
- review, update and distribute guidance material and workshop tools
- organise network events
- moderate the assessment of teachers' portfolios
- award certificates
- arrange the publication of teachers' narratives
- advocate for non-positional teacher leadership

After 20 years, however, changes in circumstances led to the decision to close HertsCam as an organisation. It could not be sustained as schools' budgets were increasingly restricted and the government's own courses for teachers became available free of charge. However, the long spread of the work to support non-positional teacher leadership from 1990 to 2024 and the direction of the development of that support has enabled us and our colleagues to learn valuable lessons which have been tested and adapted in many counties, localities and political contexts. For example, there have been programmes at Canterbury Christ Church University working with regional networks and local education authorities which have successfully drawn on and added to those lessons.

The approach to support for non-positional teacher leadership we have outlined in Chapter 1 and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 is now being shared as widely as possible through the publication of this book and the accompanying support materials. We believe that it has huge transformative potential, but it is only likely to thrive and multiply if there is radical change in the conditions that currently pertain in most parts of the world. These include the policy climate, how reforms are introduced, school principals' understanding and practice of leadership, the extent of school autonomy, the intensification of teachers' work, the nature of school-university partnerships and the hegemony of knowledge from the global north.

Conditions for non-positional teacher leadership to flourish

We are now able to offer a view of the conditions that we believe would be conducive to the flourishing of non-positional teacher leadership as we have outlined it in the preceding chapters. Having considered the challenge of the expectation to scale up, we suggest that, if the conditions were to become more conducive, support for non-positional teacher leadership could be developed in more incremental and organic ways. We therefore now explore key dimensions of the necessary conditions.

Changing the policy mindset

As we discussed in Chapter 3, there is amongst policy makers globally a dominant set of assumptions, which include that the government needs to mandate particular practices in order to improve schools' effectiveness or to pursue socio-economic goals through curricular change. Democratically elected governments are entitled to intervene to improve this important public service. Nevertheless, the top-down mindset is antithetical to the promotion of non-positional teacher leadership which, at its core, has the idea that individual teachers should be empowered and enabled to identify their own agendas for change. For this reason, we join with those voices that are calling for abandoning this top-down mindset. This would mean a fundamental change in the climate of mistrust and low expectations. The point is well made by Jacqueline Baxter at the Open University in the UK.

> Distrust of teachers is to negate their professionalism, to undermine their capacity to make a difference, by de-valuing their work and creating a climate of suspicion between teachers and parents. Governments that introduce regulatory regimes that personify and magnify this distrust, such as high stakes testing and inspection regimes, create unintended consequences, such as teaching to the test, regimes driven by fear and suspicion and undermine human and social capital.
>
> *(Baxter, 2020)*

The evidence we present in Chapter 6 reinforces the view that, within the teaching profession, there is a great depth of moral purpose and the capacity to lead change. This may be difficult for policy makers to see, so it is incumbent on those of us who work with teachers and schools to make this more visible. It is also necessary for those in leadership positions, whether they be school principals, local education authority officials or executives of organisations that manage groups of schools, to cultivate trust. This has to be a two-way process in which organisations can learn to trust teachers and teachers can trust those in leadership positions and in government. When trust levels are high and teachers are able to strengthen their agency and take action to lead change, they are less likely to feel disaffected and less inclined either to resist change or consider leaving the teaching profession.

Authentic consultation about proposed reforms

As we say above, it would be undemocratic to deny the right of elected governments to influence educational practice. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the money spent on education in 2024–5 is 4.1% of national income which is roughly half of the health service budget (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2025). Although current education spending is lower than it has been in the

past, the provision of state schooling remains a significant public service. For this reason, in spite of calling for policy makers to put more trust in teachers, it would be reasonable to expect that there will be policy initiatives from government. However, there is no doubt that teachers and school principals could be consulted more consistently and authentically. The recent Curriculum and Assessment Review in England seems to be using a promising approach that begins with a call for evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including teachers as individuals. The call is aided by a questionnaire which is to be followed by:

> a period of engagement and other forms of evidence collection, including regional events, that will enable the panel to draw on expertise and experience from across the sector.
>
> *(Department for Education, 2024c: 5)*

It remains to be seen if teachers have been enabled to engage with this process within their schools. Although the example referred to above may seem promising, many teachers we have encountered across the world tell us that thorough consultation is by no means the norm.

Teacher unions have an important function in relation to consulting about policy initiatives but, in some countries, there is extreme antagonism between unions and the government. The global federation of teacher organisations, Education International (EI), works hard to address this by supporting member unions where such antagonism occurs. EI, alongside the OECD and a series of government hosts, has also played a leading role in the annual International Summits, the first of which was hosted by the Obama administration in the USA. These conferences have provided invaluable opportunities for debate about 'teacher policy', in which EI represents their member unions which represent their members, the teachers (Bangs, 2017). This ongoing discourse is essential, even though many teachers may be unaware of their existence, let alone their deliberations.

Although, in some countries, a masters degree is required to enter the teaching profession, a minority of teachers have participated in part-time masters degree programmes alongside their occupation as teachers. We, the authors of this book, all did this in the early stages of our careers and subsequently played significant roles, not only in teaching on masters programmes, but also in the design of masters programmes that focus on enhancing teacher agency. Such programmes become forums for debate about policy as well as practice but, in general, there is no conduit for participants to engage with policy makers about these debates as part of ongoing professional discourse, accessible by all.

The key point is that teachers need to be empowered and enabled to engage in policy discourse. This could be achieved within events organised by teacher unions, professional agencies and other associations. Ideally, there should be opportunities for organised consultation within schools so that all members of

staff can participate and contribute. There may be some reluctance on the part of school principals to facilitate consultation on the grounds that they tend to want to protect their staff from the pressure of external influences. In addition, they may fear that consultative processes could spark disagreement and even disaffection within the staff body, but our experience is that authentic consultation helps to improve collegiality and commitment to innovation and improvement.

Co-design and development in educational reform

There is an encouraging trend within the UK and other OECD countries for innovations in public services to use co-design approaches which are portrayed as a step up from user-centred approaches (Hughes, 2021). In the co-design model, public servants seek to establish partnerships with those who are affected by an innovation. Here, everyone's lived experience becomes a resource to be respected and taken into account. This means that design or development teams must include not just those normally defined as experts but the full range of users and practitioners.

Trischler, Dietrich and Rundle-Thiele (2019) carried out a number of case studies and, as a result, offered a co-design framework which consists of seven steps, resourcing, planning, recruiting, sensitising, facilitating, reflecting and building for change. These steps seem to be very helpful in that they would enable a co-design process to be successful. However, the concern remains that co-design teams are only going to involve a handful of users and practitioners who represent teachers throughout the system. This inevitably leaves the majority who may be affected by the 'roll-out' of the innovation excluded from the process.

School principals and leadership discourse

School principals play pivotal roles in leading their schools, but not all of them are accustomed to discussing leadership and engaging with the academic literature and reports from civil society organisations. In some countries, it is not unusual for school principals and vice-principals to study leadership by participating in masters programmes or short online courses. Some manage to do this independently simply by reading some of the copious texts on organisational leadership or educational leadership, most of which seem to be published in OECD countries. Those who have ready access to such programmes and related literature are able to apply sophisticated conceptual frameworks to their own reflections as practitioners and to their strategic planning as leaders. An obvious obstacle to engaging in such discourse is that many school principals find that their time and energy are entirely consumed with urgent problem-solving and the usual transactional activities, as we highlighted in Chapter 3.

Many years ago, the OECD called for the professionalisation of school leadership, and their report drew on examples from member countries where there

was already a well-developed discourse on educational leadership (Pont, Nusche & Morman, 2008). Where this has occurred, school leaders have been able to develop their understanding of leadership as a discipline and develop their skills and capacity as leaders. This leads to increased self-confidence and the desire for the autonomy to lead their institutions without hindrance. Part of the OECD's argument for professionalising school leadership featured the role of material incentives linked to the provision of training and a career ladder. Induction and preparation programmes for school principals vary in their content and quality across the world. A recent report from the Wallace Foundation in the USA identified good practice in this area and stressed the extent to which this made a difference to students' learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). The authors also noted considerable variation in provision across the country. In England in the 1990s, the government established the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) which set up courses leading to the National Professional Qualification for Headship. For a few years, this qualification was compulsory for anyone seeking a school principalship. The need for this sort of provision has been recently underscored by the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2024b), which includes a statement about the need for shared and collaborative leadership that we naturally welcome.

> Leadership status needs to have deeper roots than a position of power. It needs to be earned through daily practice that demonstrates integrity, commitment, ability and humanity. These qualities are strengthened if leadership functions are shared, formally and informally, with members of a management team (e.g. the vice principal or heads of department), teachers and school support staff, students, parents, and community members.
>
> *(UNESCO, 2024b: 17)*

It is disappointing, however, that the report notes that only a third of the principal preparation programmes reviewed for this study included content about shared leadership.

The need for networking for school principals was recognised by the government in England when in 2011 they created 'teaching schools' to promote collaboration. This initiative echoed that of a teaching hospital and drew on David Hargreaves's work on the self-improving school system. Hargreaves (2011) argued that, in a mature system, school principals working in collaborative networks or alliances, with their peers, were best placed to transform educational provision and students' outcomes. By 2021, almost 600 teaching school alliances had been set up across England (Department for Education, 2021).

Provision such as that mentioned above is expensive, of course, so it is perhaps helpful for school principals to consider creating their own forums within which they could share experiences and exchange knowledge. One example of this in England is the Headteachers' Roundtable which began as a small pressure group and grew into a substantial 'think tank' (Whittaker, 2025). Local

education authorities often convene meetings of school principals, but these can sometimes lead to disharmony if there are contentious issues, for example to do with levels of funding. The arguments for teacher networking outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 are likely to apply to principals' network opportunities, in that they have the potential to strengthen moral purpose and build a sense of collective self-efficacy.

So, how can opportunities for school principals to engage in leadership discourse help to create the conditions which allow support for non-positional teacher leadership to flourish? We suggest that when such discourse becomes part of the fabric of the professional lives of school principals, they will reflect on what makes a school successful and will search for strategies to make their schools more effective. In the light of authoritative reports such as the one by UNESCO cited above, governments may be tempted to issue guidance for principals about strategies which focus on matters such as capacity building, the empowerment of all school staff and the cultivation of a positive professional culture. However, such transformational leadership strategies are more likely to be authentic and effective if they have been cultivated more organically through dialogic, peer-to-peer learning.

Autonomy for schools

School principals who want to adopt transformational leadership strategies may find themselves frustrated if they are operating within very centralised systems in which the organisational structure of the school is determined by government regulations and is immutable. In such systems, principals may have no independent control over the school budget. In contrast, school principals in England have for many years enjoyed the freedom to develop their own strategic plans which might include, for example, elements of restructuring such as the creation of new posts of responsibility or reorganising teams. A secondary school principal might decide that it is better to have an integrated Science Faculty rather than separate heads of the Biology, Chemistry and Physics Departments. A primary school principal might decide to ask a teacher to take on the role of leading the development of literacy across the school. In both examples, there would be implications for salary levels and perhaps also for office space and administrative support, and headteachers would have the autonomy to deal with this. However, as we explore in Chapter 4, the situation in England has been changing with the development of multi-academy trusts (MATs), in which headteachers may find themselves with less autonomy. It may be that executives of MATs work closely with headteachers on transformational leadership strategies across the whole cluster of schools. Such strategies could include adopting the NPTL model.

Financial autonomy is not without its problems, of course. Some principals report that they struggle to manage their budgets because they lack the necessary expertise and need opportunities for their own professional learning in this

regard. Some principals report that having financial autonomy means that they carry the responsibility and are held to account, but they have little control over the level of funding that government chooses to devolve to schools. The funding may simply not be enough for even the most basic needs, such as safe buildings and enough teachers.

The implication of principals having financial autonomy, however, is that they can opt to introduce programmes that could contribute to developing a more productive professional culture and knowledge sharing within the school. An example of this would be one that supports non-positional teacher leadership. As indicated in previous chapters, such decisions would be taken because of their strategic value to the school rather than simply because of teachers' entitlement to opportunities for continuing professional development. However, if designed creatively, it could also satisfy the need to provide professional learning opportunities and contribute to the retention of teachers, thus satisfying other developmental priorities at very low cost. This has been the case at MATs we have worked with in Kent and Newcastle, for example.

Addressing the intensification of teachers' work

Research evidence supports what teachers have told us about the challenge of the increased intensity of their work. A survey in Britain provided evidence of reduced time for professional development and reduced levels of participation in decision making (Green, 2021). Further studies add to the picture of intensification and time poverty which undermine teachers' wellbeing (e.g. Creagh et al., 2023). The problem is not confined to the UK and seems to be occurring globally (Gavin & McGrath-Champ, 2024).

There is a clear need for policy initiatives that address the problem of the overload and increasing intensity of teachers' work. This is not just about being fair to teachers, which is surely reason enough, but if policy makers need to be more pragmatic about it, they should consider the expense involved in a large proportion of the workforce quitting the profession only a few years after the state has invested in their recruitment and initial preparation programmes. It is also a matter of school effectiveness, because teachers under this level of pressure are not able to engage in the reflection and dialogue through which they will improve their practice. This sort of time poverty can of course mean that there is little space for teachers to become change agents and lead collaborative project work. However, we have found that if time is carved out, teachers find it energising and inspiring to gain autonomy and lead change, creating a positive spiral which counteracts other pressures.

Work intensification and time poverty can also militate against teachers' engagement in networking with colleagues in other schools, for which we have made the case in Chapter 5. However, the exchange of ideas with such colleagues develops knowledge about leadership and learning, strengthens teachers' moral purpose and builds a sense of collective self-efficacy, all of which help to

retain teachers in the profession. It is unusual for teachers to engage in international networking, but our experience tells us that this extends and deepens the benefits of networking. When teachers network with their peers in other countries, they see themselves as belonging to a global teaching profession. The development of online networking since the pandemic has given teachers the opportunity to learn a great deal, exchanging knowledge across international boundaries and setting aside the assumptions linked to the particular system in which they normally work (Underwood, 2017).

University-school partnerships

Historically, partnerships between universities and schools have arisen out of necessity: while programmes of initial teacher education are usually provided by universities, there is invariably a need for placements in which the student teacher spends a number of weeks working alongside teachers in a school. This is common practice across OECD countries (OECD, 2024). The challenge of making the necessary arrangements for the practicum and for the assessment of the student teachers' competence has required collaboration between schools and universities. These institutional relationships have tended to be asymmetrical, with the university side of the equation having a greater share of power and control (Handscombe, Gu & Varley, 2014). In England in the 1980s, the government intervened to try to ensure that the schools would be the dominant partners. Subsequently, the minister demanded that a partnership should be:

> one in which the school and its teachers are in the lead in the whole of the training process from the initial design of a course through to the assessment of the performance of the individual student (DES, 1992).
>
> *(Davies, 1992: 17)*

It was thought that student teachers needed to develop professional competence which some politicians saw as being more important than the educational theory that they believed the universities wanted to emphasise (Davies, 1992). In more recent times in England and Wales there are some pathways to qualification that bypass the universities. The tension regarding the balance of power in school-university partnerships throws into question the use of the term 'partnership', a term which implies mutuality and equal status. Some commentators have used the term 'third space' to denote the site of institutional overlap where boundaries are blurred and shared goals can be pursued (Whitchurch, 2008).

In some cases, the collaborative relationship between a university and schools has extended to school improvement, continuing professional development and research. The University of Cambridge, for example, has seen several such collaborations, including the IQEA (Improving the Quality of Education for All) project (Hopkins, 2002) and SUPER (School-University Partnership for Educational

Research) project (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007). An exploration of the aim of such partnerships and its impact on the nature of teacher activity is helpful here.

Some school-university partnerships focus on enabling teachers to research their own practice (e.g. Groundwater-Smith, 2012). The action research tradition discussed in Chapter 3 is where our work began towards the end of the 1980s. It was attractive at that time because the starting point for an action research process is usually the practitioner researcher's own concern or problem. This is of itself agential and can open up a pathway to empowerment, but within a short time we became aware of its limitations. One of the key difficulties is that action research has been introduced to teachers in the context of degree or diploma courses offered by universities, which usually means that participants are expected to read about research methodology and justify their research plans in essays and dissertations. There have undoubtedly been innovations in some universities where teachers on part-time masters programmes are invited, for example, to submit assignments such as a graphic narrative of an inquiry process. On the HertsCam MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning, entirely taught by experienced school staff, one of the assignments was the presentation of a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate the planning of a development project (Frost et al., 2018). However, many teachers on masters courses still experience the expectation to write a dissertation that conforms to the familiar formula of chapters having headings such as research question, methodology, findings, results and conclusions. Adjacent to this issue is the focus on traditional research methods which may not be suitable in the context of practice development in school. Teachers on university-led masters programmes can sometimes find themselves being disempowered and diverted from the more important challenge of leadership.

We have argued before that critical scholarship has a key role to play in teachers' leadership (Frost et al., 2018), but if universities want to empower teachers as agents of change, they need to embrace forms of scholarship designed to enable participants to address the problems and concerns they face in their practice. Over 30 years ago Ernest Boyer's seminal report offered a critique of restricted forms of scholarship. He said that 'basic research has come to be viewed as the first and most essential form of scholarly activity' (1990: 15). Perhaps it is time for university departments of education to reflect on how much progress there has been in the intervening 35 years.

Teachers who are attempting to lead change need to be able to draw on relevant literatures about pedagogy but also about leadership, change management, project design and much more. They need access to literature not simply to read about 'what works' but to discover the conceptual frameworks that can illuminate their practice and their leadership endeavours.

Decolonising knowledge

We have already drawn attention to the hegemony of approaches to educational reform within OECD countries which entail assumptions about hierarchical

structures and power relations in educational leadership (see Chapter 3). A key feature of what we propose in this book is empowering and enabling teachers to create knowledge and build knowledge together through networking. In promoting our approach to support for non-positional teacher leadership around the world, we are calling for the re-casting of the relationship between knowing and knowledge making (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). The idea of 'cognitive injustice' has been subject to critical analysis by Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

> Throughout the world, not only are there very diverse forms of knowledge of matter, society, life and spirit, but also many and very diverse concepts of what counts as knowledge and criteria that may be used to validate it.
>
> *(de Sousa Santos, 2015: 192)*

NORRAG's 'The South Also Knows' campaign addresses the problem that stems from the traditional assumption that knowledge and practices well-established in the global north should be adopted in the global south. NORRAG is a large organisation whose mandate is to 'co-produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge and to strengthen capacity for and with the wide range of stakeholders' (NORRAG, 2024). NORRAG's campaign highlights the extent to which knowledge from the global south is underrepresented in international discourse and policy making tends to be based on what is assumed to be of value in the global north. This amounts to what Miranda Fricker called 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 2007).

The pursuit of epistemic justice in education is just one manifestation of the broader debate about decolonisation that arises in all walks of life. For example, in a recent exhibition at the British Museum, the British Guyanese artist Hew Locke explores the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. He invites the viewer to think again about the stories behind some of the famous artefacts kept in museums (British Museum, 2025). For our purposes, the discourse of decolonisation underlines the importance of an approach to leadership that celebrates dialogue and the democratisation of knowledge creation, rather than one that simply oversees the implementation of what is already known.

The discussion outlined above resonates with feminist perspectives such as that put forward by Banu Ozkazanc-Pan who notes that 'agency materializes through shared histories and acts that make visible the unseen' (2019b: 1217). Key here is the emphasis placed on the role that shared stories and collective action play in the development of agency. In addition, the notion of recognising, valuing and making visible teachers' school improvement work is also central to our concept of teacher leadership.

Conclusion

We argue above that support for non-positional teacher leadership has the potential to thrive and develop if favourable conditions were to prevail. These include a different policy mindset, more authentic consultation about reforms,

more frequent use of co-design approaches to reform, better leadership development for school principals, school autonomy, reduction in the intensification of teachers' work, more enlightened modes of scholarship and a greater degree of epistemic justice.

As we said at the opening of this chapter, calling for change in the dimensions discussed constitutes a formidable challenge but we remain optimistic about the possibility of social, cultural and political change. In any case, we have learned that when teachers are inspired and encouraged to seize the initiative, their voices are amplified, and their influence can spread. We have observed that change can spread from the bottom up and, as we have argued, the potential to provide the necessary support for non-positional teacher leadership lies within the teaching profession itself.

8

A PEDAGOGY FOR TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

As we stated at the beginning of this book, we are advocating for a particular strategy for empowering teachers and other education practitioners and enabling them to lead change. This is a brief chapter in which we present recommendations which draw from the more detailed discussion in previous chapters.

The support materials linked to this book provide detailed guidance for those wishing to initiate and facilitate programmes to support non-positional teacher leadership. Our experience and research over more than three decades leads to the conviction that such programmes can enable practitioners in schools to transform themselves, their practice and their schools. Evidence to illustrate and reinforce this is presented in Chapter 6. We believe that our case is compelling and that our proposals will continue to be acted on in many places around the world. However, the possibility of our proposals being taken up on a massive scale is somewhat remote because they go against the grain of the prevailing policy climate. In any case, as our discussion of this in Chapter 7 indicates, we are not fully convinced that scaling up is desirable. Nevertheless, we are confident that readers will take away some key recommendations that we hope will be influential in a wide range of educational programmes and activities.

We hope that readers will take away the idea that programmes and activities should be designed to empower teachers. As should be clear from our arguments hitherto, this is not a matter of delegation in which teachers who appear to have special aptitude are given roles of responsibility. Rather, empowerment should be interpreted as enabling teachers to initiate change. While this may include the gestures and comments aimed at encouraging teachers by indicating that their leadership is permissible and welcome, empowerment primarily requires enablement. This requires structured experiences and activities over a substantial period of time, through which teachers clarify their values and

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concerns, raise their awareness of issues and devise plans for action. If the huge untapped resource of teachers' moral purpose, creativity and ingenuity – 'the sleeping giant' – is to be released and mobilised, programmes must enhance teachers' agency. It may be tempting to focus on staff morale and wellbeing and assume that enhanced agency will result, but instead we argue that enhanced agency leads to high levels of morale and wellbeing. What is required, therefore, could be expressed as a pedagogy for empowerment which is reflected in the recommendations set out below.

Ten recommendations

We have already argued the case for a specific programme to support non-positional teacher leadership but in this final section we set out ten key recommendations for those who might be involved in the provision of any programme or the organisation of activities aimed at teacher development and the development of practice.

Recommendation 1

Perhaps the most obvious, but nonetheless important, principle is that teachers' participation in programmes or activities designed to enable professional learning and practice development should be on a voluntary basis. If participation is either obligatory or engineered through financial incentives or release from teaching duties, it is unlikely to secure participants' full commitment to the endeavour.

Recommendation 2

Programmes or activities should be organised so that they do not impinge on students' learning. Attending school is every child's entitlement which should be fiercely protected. This is why programmes that disrupt the scheduled programme of teaching should be avoided.

Recommendation 3

Activities that take place on the school site at the end of the teaching day and are facilitated by experienced members of the school staff are cost-effective. If we want programmes or activities for teacher development and practice development to be sustained, cost is a fundamental consideration. Cost is sometimes unrecognised and only becomes visible when fees are charged. There are many other costs that are less obvious, however. For example, a seminar for teachers at a local government building entails the cost of the staff at the facility and the costs of the maintenance of the building. There are also travel costs when teachers travel to that building, and if the teacher attends on a school day there is the cost of substitute teaching.

Recommendation 4

Organising programmes or activities on the school site as described above has advantages other than cost, chief among them being convenience for the participants. When travel to the meeting takes just a few minutes and participants are greeted, welcomed and offered refreshments, the impact on teachers' time is minimal and their wellbeing is enhanced. Not only is this a cost-saving but it is also respectful. Staff retention is an ongoing problem for schools and so anything that makes a teacher feel respected and valued contributes to addressing this.

Recommendation 5

The evidence presented in Chapter 6 clearly shows that it is possible to cultivate a cadre of experienced teachers who can become skilled in the art of facilitating workshops and seminars for teachers within their own schools and neighbouring schools. It is quite common, especially in resource-rich systems such as the UK, to draw on expertise to be found in universities, government agencies and in the world of consultancy. This may be accessed by paying for teachers to attend courses or by inviting experts to come into the school to make presentations to the whole staff. This is of course expensive and does not necessarily lead to new or improved practice. Facilitation from within the profession is a much better alternative because it is a resource that already exists. There are major advantages associated with this because of the low cost which makes it sustainable, but it is also advantageous because it is very rewarding for those who take on the challenge of facilitating. They tend to feel an enhanced sense of agency and the experience of facilitating contributes to their own professional learning. It is also possible to invite external experts to work alongside in-school facilitators, which can bring fresh perspectives to bear and also build capacity within the school.

Recommendation 6

Programmes which aim to have a transformative effect should operate over a substantial period of time. Part-time masters degree programmes that some teachers undertake tend to last at least two years and these can be transformative, but they are very costly and not always empowering. School-based programmes can be designed to extend over an academic year. This allows for the development of a sense of community within which dialogue, authentic reflection and mutual critical friendship can thrive. A sense of community can be cultivated by providing refreshments, asking participants to agree a set of protocols for protecting privacy and governing the way sensitive matters are discussed and making sure that each person's identity is recognised and respected.

Recommendation 7

It is essential to enable participants to bring their experience and knowledge into the room. This should be regarded as a key resource that can be drawn upon in the process of collective reflection and discussion. Creating a sense of community creates a conducive environment for this to happen. If participants are to be able to share their experiences, reflections and views, there needs to be a high level of trust and respect for agreed protocols, enabling participants to feel that the group is a safe space.

Recommendation 8

Perhaps the most important element of a pedagogy for empowerment is that it must enable teachers to act. Enablement has to be so much more than the all too familiar encouragement or exhortation in the form of an added-on challenge at the end of a programme such as 'Write down what you will achieve by the end of term following this course'. Planning for action has to be seen as a process, not an event, and needs to be scaffolded throughout. Ongoing support for action should come from membership of a supportive community in which participants can share their experience and reflect with others on the challenges and issues arising.

Recommendation 9

Teachers' projects often begin in their own classrooms and planning for action might be construed as their intention to change their own practice. This is laudable, of course, but its transformative effect is limited. For new and improved practices to be developed and sustained within a school, they need to become embedded into the normal routines of the school. Some may assume that teachers should conduct an inquiry and then present their recommendations to the school principal, hoping that they will take action. This is profoundly misguided. What is necessary is for teachers to exercise leadership themselves, which entails managing collaboration with colleagues.

Recommendation 10

Teachers rarely have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with colleagues from other schools, but well-organised opportunities for networking can be powerful. When teachers engage in networking, they are called upon to create narratives about their practice and their attempts to develop practice. This entails valuable sense-making which can surface issues that the story-teller feels they have to address. The colleagues whom teachers will meet in networking scenarios bring their own, sometimes quite different, sense-making to the discussion, which leads to the collective process of knowledge building. A

clash of different perspectives arises because each school is unique and has a distinctive professional culture. It also arises when teachers from different subject areas and age groups compare practice and challenge each other's assumptions about learning and teaching. The necessary processing of these different perspectives is extremely valuable, partly because of the professional learning involved, but also because it challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about practices that may be normal in the teacher's school.

All of the above should enable teachers to develop critical perspectives on their own practice, on what they can see around them, and on the wider social and cultural factors that shape policy and practice. A degree of scholarship will enrich the development of critical perspectives, but reflection, dialogue and action as discussed above are the most powerful drivers for criticality. The need for teachers to develop critical perspectives has never been so necessary and so urgent. The idea of critical thinking has a long history, with key texts stretching over at least 60 years and featuring writers such as Glaser (1941), Foucault (1978), Benhabib (1986), van Gelder (2005) and Halpern and Dunn (2022), but it nevertheless remains on the margins. Perhaps this is because, as with many such innovations, it is perceived to be another piece of content to be fitted into the school curriculum. We need instead to regard critical thinking as an essential dimension of the process of learning.

As we have argued throughout this book, social injustice in education persists despite interventions from the UN and governments around the world. Children and young people now, and in the future, are facing challenges that those of us educated in the middle of the last century were barely aware of. These challenges include the climate emergency, international conflict and subsequent mass migration. These days, children are bombarded with information, some of it in the form of misinformation, disinformation and marketing on multiple platforms. As educators, we have to take on this challenge and enable students to develop what might be called intellectual resilience. The word resilience is associated with trauma because it suggests the ability to bounce back after a catastrophic episode but, given the challenges that young people are facing and will increasingly face in the future, perhaps it is appropriate. To enable children to become resilient and adaptable, teachers need to move towards what Giroux called critical pedagogy (2020). In other words, they need to become critical thinkers themselves. Some teachers may study philosophy but, for most, criticality has to be continuously nurtured through the experience of teaching, together with organised reflection and dialogue about that experience and, most importantly, through the experience of leading change.

The ten recommendations above are applicable to any programme or set of activities intended to lead to teacher development and the development of practice but, in closing, we want to return to the proposition we set out at the end of Chapter 1. There we set out the focus of our advocacy, which is a particular form of support for non-positional teacher leadership. We hope that

readers have been persuaded by our arguments and the evidence presented in this book that it is an exciting opportunity to create a pathway to addressing the current injustices evident in our schools and education systems. If you have been persuaded and want to take action to initiate your own programme based on the approach we propose, you should explore the support materials that accompany this book (www.routledge.com/9781041032717). Start by downloading the *Non-Positional Teacher Leadership: Information and Guidance* document, which is available in English, Russian, Spanish and Arabic. You can also download the *Planning Your Non-Positional Teacher Leadership Programme* guide and the eight Workshop Session guides, together with the tools for use in the workshop sessions, although they are only in English.

We hope to see many more non-positional teacher leadership programmes springing up around the world and empowering teachers, regardless of status or formal position, as agents of change. Where this occurs, we believe there will be authentic transformation. We also hope that those who choose to initiate and facilitate such programmes will find each other and form a social movement in which they can collaborate and advocate for non-positional teacher leadership. Perhaps then we can show policy makers that the answer to the education crisis lies within the teaching profession. Ultimately, it is teachers who can and will make a difference to what happens in schools. It is they who can and will address the social injustice suffered by children and young people all over the world.

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