

Leading for change: School Leadership Standards and Practices in a Global Context

Edited by Susan Douglas CBE



January 2025

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Foreword

Marina Gautier, Head of Policy and Insight for English and School Education, British Council

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, countries around the world have reflected on their progress towards creating high-quality, inclusive and equitable school systems¹ that support young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to live and work in a globalised economy and to contribute responsibly both locally and globally. Inevitably this has thrown the spotlight on those who might play a part in influencing student outcomes: the education workforce.

Since John Hattie first published his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to attainment in 2008,² it has been widely agreed that the quality of teaching within a setting is the greatest influence on student learning. But who influences those teachers and the quality of what they deliver? Certainly, initial teacher training, along with the academic background, values and motivation of the teacher will play their part, but the role of the school leader is also critically important. As Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins observe in their paper *Seven strong claims about school leadership* (2010³, revisited 2019⁴), ‘Successful school leaders improve teaching and learning and thus pupil outcomes ... most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, teaching practices and through developing teachers’ capacities for leadership.’

At the British Council we’ve therefore chosen to focus some of the work we do with policy makers worldwide on these school leaders and the critical role they play in improving student outcomes. Recently, we brought together policy makers from 15 countries to specifically examine the role of the school leader at the heart of their communities and the impact that positive relationships with parents may have, for example, in terms of advocacy for girls’ education. We have also supported the development of headteacher standards in Pakistan, Nepal and Nigeria to ensure there is a common expectation of what good school leadership looks like, enabling policy makers to provide appropriate professional development, create robust recruitment procedures and support those who aspire to headship.

We also recognise the importance of instructional leadership, given its potential impact on the quality of teaching in the classroom and therefore on pupil outcomes. As Leithwood and colleagues note,^{5,6} the kind of leadership that impacts most significantly on student outcomes; ‘focuses on ... developing teachers’ skills, providing instructional support [and] monitoring student learning.’ Therefore, the school’s ability to improve and sustain student outcomes is dependent on its approach to instructional leadership. As such, we are pleased to include Dr Jane Doughty’s chapter on the thinking behind instructional leadership, looking closely at what it involves at a practitioner level. She also reflects on what this means for school leaders and policy makers in terms of its implementation at system level. We have aligned our work to this approach, and the real-world impact of this is exemplified in several of the case studies, collected from around the world, that are included in this publication and demonstrate just how effective and sustainable instructional leadership can be.

The publication is divided into three sections and showcases contributions from across the countries we work with. The first section covers the role of the school leader, the second covers articles on how we can support the development of school leaders, and the third section offers several interesting and innovative case studies. Policy makers and academics from diverse settings have been kind enough to accept invitations to share their knowledge, approaches and experiences in relation to the positive impact that effective school leadership can have on a system. We know there is not one answer – no single template for success – but through collaboration and dialogue, we can collectively create the conditions where informed decisions can be made about how we can best provide for our pupils.

And so, with thanks to our partners and collaborators, I am pleased to present this publication, and I hope these evidence-based narratives will provide you with stimulation for further debate and reflection.

1 UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal 4.

2 Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Abingdon: Routledge.

3 Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2010). *Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

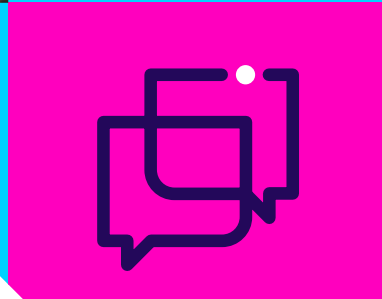
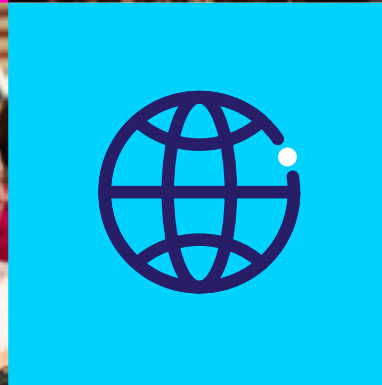
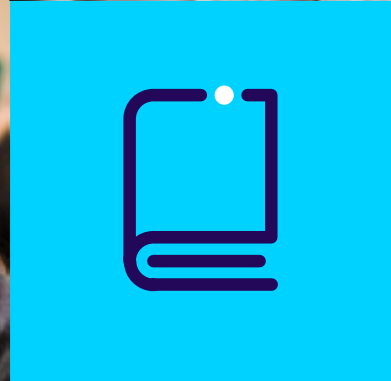
4 Leithwood, K., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2019). *Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership Revisited*. Abingdon: Routledge.

5 Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2010). *Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

6 Leithwood, K., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2019). *Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership Revisited*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Section one:

The role of the school leader



School leadership standards: the introduction of standards for school heads into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Provinces, Pakistan

Gohar Ali Khan, Director, Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Muhammad Ali, British Council, and Jane English, International Consultant

Introduction

Pakistan is a large diverse country which faces many challenges in the education sector. There are 227,506 institutions, employing 1,625,747 teachers, serving 42,5576,130 students, in a nation which consistently performs lower than its South Asia neighbours and countries with similar per capita income.¹ Pakistan is also among the E9² countries that have the world's highest out-of-school populations.³

The *National Education Policy Framework 2018* identifies three key challenges:

1. Addressing the high numbers of out-of-school children and ensuring that enrolled children complete their education.

Pakistan grapples with one of the world's most significant challenges in terms of out-of-school children (OOSC). Despite recent progress in reducing the percentage of OOSC from 44 per cent in 2016–2017 to per cent in 2021–2022, over that period the absolute number rose from 22.02 million (excluding AJK (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) and GB (Gilgit-Baltistan)) to 26.21 million, with only 7 per cent of those starting Grade 1 reaching Grade 5.⁴

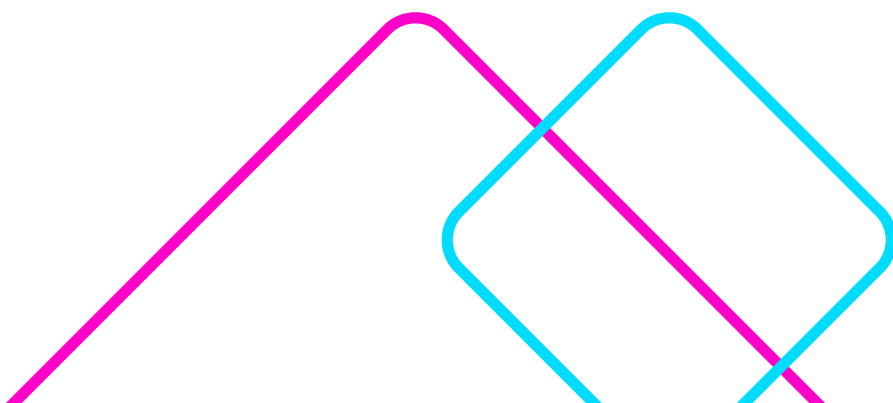
2. Addressing uniform education for all children.

There is huge disparity across the country in relation to opportunities for accessing education and the provision of quality of education

'To give equitable access to economic and social opportunities for all children, Pakistan needs to provide standardized education services across the various school systems. This entails a standardization of curriculum and textbooks, common standards of teaching and learning, multi-language proficiency and regular review of learning outcomes to determine uniformity of learning outcomes across public, private and madrassa systems.'⁵

3. Providing quality education to all children across the country and addressing the quality of instruction they receive in the classroom.

In addition to a disparity in access across the country, there are huge differences in the standard and quality of education that enrolled children receive in various education systems across the country.⁶ 'The education outcomes of Pakistani children as measured through a sample national assessment survey (2014), show that children perform far below the required national standards in all provinces and do not achieve minimum mastery of mathematics, reading, and language (as defined by the national government). This is directly linked to the quality of instruction they receive in the classroom from the teachers.'⁷



The rationale for introducing standards for school heads

It is against this backdrop that both the Federal Government and Provincial Governments in Pakistan have recognised the importance of school leadership in creating high quality education. In partnership with the British Council, it was decided to introduce headteacher standards into the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

A review of school leadership in Pakistan in March 2022 made seven recommendations to strengthen school leadership in Pakistan in order to improve outcomes for students.

- Recommendation 1: The development of headteacher standards (a competency framework).
- Recommendation 5: The development of a framework for the performance management of teachers and headteachers.
- Recommendation 7: A review of the headteacher appointment system.

Recommendations 5 and 7 could not be implemented without first creating and implementing headteacher standards for Pakistan.

How the standards for school heads were co-created

The standards were created to support headteachers to develop and improve their leadership and develop a common leadership vocabulary. They will also facilitate the future development of effective systems and processes to ensure high quality leadership and improved student outcomes in all schools across Pakistan.

The headteacher standards were co-created through a collaborative approach which involved face-to-face meetings and online webinars. Two British Council international consultants undertook a literary review which gave an insight into the priorities for education in Pakistan and a number of fact-finding online consultations took place with stakeholders (education officers and current and future school leaders) to gain an understanding of what was required. A task group was set up from each of the two provinces consisting of 15 people from the education community and two supporting facilitators. The task groups and the consultants worked together online to undertake the following:

- Identifying the desired impact the introduction of the standards should have on the education system.
- Clarifying the key responsibilities of headteachers/principals.
- Identifying the challenges faced regarding constructing, disseminating and embedding the standards.
- Identifying how the standards might be used by aspiring school leaders, school leaders and education officials.
- Reviewing standards from four different countries and the lessons to be learned from those countries.
- Clarifying the key areas task group members wanted to include in the standards.
- Looking at lessons to be learned from introducing teacher standards in Pakistan.

The standards consist of a set of five key areas relevant to headteachers in schools in Pakistan. They take into account the cultural diversity of the country and are flexible in order to provide a framework which can be used effectively in any province and in any type of school.



Standards for school heads

The framework comprises five key areas:

1. Leading the school into the future
2. Leading and managing teaching and learning (instructional leadership)
3. Leading, managing and developing staff
4. Leading and managing the organisation
5. Leading in the community

Each of these five key areas consists of:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Evaluation statement – demonstration of knowledge and skills in action

The levels

The standards can be achieved at three different levels:

1. Developing
2. Proficient
3. Advanced

This allows school heads to see the sequential progress in leadership that exists in the standards – level two builds on level one, and level three builds on levels one and two.

Implementation plan

An eight-stage implementation plan was produced:

- Stage 1 – Approval and status of the standards
- Stage 2 – Agreeing a pilot project with a number of headteachers
- Stage 3 – Orientation of the education community
- Stage 4 – Introduction of the standards to the education community
- Stage 5 – Monitoring of the implementation from the very start
- Stage 6 – Evaluation of the implementation from the very start
- Stage 7 – Review of implementation and the standards
- Stage 8 – Scale up across the provinces and Pakistan

The first important task was to gain high level approval from the education authorities. Experience in other countries has shown that failure to gain this formal approval led to the standards either not being introduced at all or done so in a way that had limited impact. It was also recommended that the evaluation and monitoring group should be set up and start their work early on in the process.

Several launch events were organised and well received, and were followed by the formal notification of the Headteacher Standards in Pakistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa approval was given by the Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education, and in Punjab by the Quaid-E-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED).

Another key consideration for the successful introduction of the standards was the readiness of the education community to receive and embrace these standards in Stage 3 – Orientation of the education community. It was decided that this stage should follow on from Stage 1, before introducing a pilot scheme.

The orientation programme

As the orientation of the education community in advance of a full launch of the standards was considered very high priority, it was decided to provide training. As part of this training, headteachers were asked to undertake a project in their own schools, which if undertaken successfully would lead to a School Leadership Excellence Award. The focus of the orientation programme was mainly on key area two of the headteacher standards – Leading and managing teaching and learning (instructional leadership). Pakistan recognises the importance of instructional leadership in improving quality and standards in education, leading to effective pedagogy and better student outcomes.

‘The more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater will be their influence on student outcomes.’⁸

‘Instructional leadership is the most effective type of leadership practice for improving student learning outcomes ... The substantial and in-depth body of research that has been undertaken over many years by a range of scholars and researchers provides convincing evidence that instructional leadership has a consistent positive effect on learning outcomes for students across diverse contexts and changing contexts.’⁹

The orientation programme provided training which would highlight the change in thinking required regarding the leadership role of the school leader and the skills and knowledge required to lead teaching and learning (instructional leadership).

Following the training the Directorate of Professional Development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the School Education Department in South Punjab, and the Federal Directorate of Education, in partnership with the British Council, created a School Leadership Award and invited headteachers to take part by undertaking a project in their school. Headteachers submitted an action plan followed by an evaluation of the work that had taken place. These projects and their impacts were then assessed by government experts.

Faisal Khan Tarakai, Minister for the Elementary and Secondary Education Department in the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said: ‘Our collaboration with the British Council has empowered some of our school heads with the skills needed to lead their schools towards excellence. This partnership underscores the importance of international connections in enriching our educational landscape, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.’



The projects had an impact on teachers and students in significant numbers:

	Number of districts involved	School leaders trained	Teachers involved in the project	Students impacted	School leaders who achieved the excellence award
KP	36	604	2,400	192,00	233, with 6 at advanced level
Punjab	11	600			415

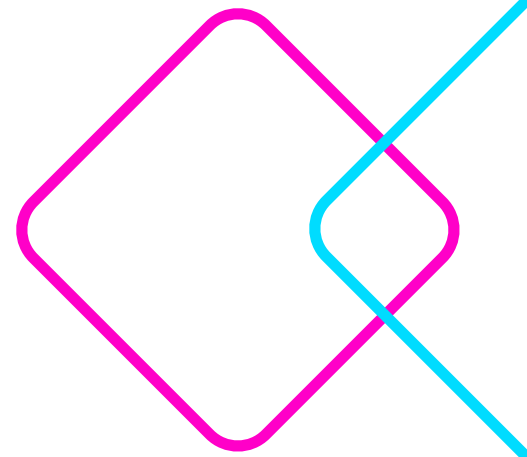
Projects which met the criteria were awarded the School Leadership Excellence Award and headteachers were invited to a prestigious ceremony. Out of the 887 school leaders who engaged in this programme, 602 achieved the Excellence Award.

The implementation of the standards is going well, and the next step is to provide training for headteachers on key area five – Leading in the community.

Conclusion

Co-creating the standards and ensuring there were sufficient opportunities to consult gave the education community a sense of ownership of them. Of notable success was the methodology of consultants producing draft proposals which the task group then adjusted to meet the needs, context and culture of Pakistan. Consultation, both online and face-to-face, was essential to enable key members of the education community to contribute and feel ownership. The gaining of both federal and provincial approval of the standards was the most important step in ensuring the implementation plan was accepted by school leaders and education officials. The extensive orientation programme was hugely successful, providing dedicated school leadership training and in-school projects which had a direct impact on student outcomes.

The school leadership standards are of high quality. They have been embraced by education officials and will have an important impact on leadership in schools across Pakistan, which will in turn improve outcomes for students throughout the country.



- 1 Pakistan Institute of Education (2024). *Pakistan Education Statistics 2021–22*. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, Management Information System (MIS) Wing, Pakistan Institute of Education.
- 2 In 'E9', the E stands for education and the 9 represents the following nine countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, representing over half of the world's population and 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults.
- 3 Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (2018). *The National Education Policy Framework 2018*. Available at: <https://www.mofept.gov.pk/Policies>
- 4 Pakistan Institute of Education (2024). *Pakistan Education Statistics 2021–22*. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, Management Information System (MIS) Wing, Pakistan Institute of Education.
- 5 Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (2018). *The National Education Policy Framework 2018*. Available at: <https://www.mofept.gov.pk/Policies>
- 6 Pakistan Institute of Education (2024). *Pakistan Education Statistics 2021–22*. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, Management Information System (MIS) Wing, Pakistan Institute of Education.
- 7 Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (2018). *The National Education Policy Framework 2018*. Available at: <https://www.mofept.gov.pk/Policies>
- 8 Robinson, V. (2011). *Student-centered leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 9 Le Fevre, D. (2021). *Instructional leadership and why it matters*. The Education Hub. Available at: <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/instructional-leadership-and-why-it-matters/>

School leadership standards: digital guidelines for school leaders in South Africa

Dr Isabel Tarling, CEO, Limina Education Services

South Africa is a country of extreme diversity. In one day, you can play in the snow in Sutherland or Worcester, and then fly two or three hours to frolic in the warm tropical ocean waves of the Natal coast. Scattered across this diverse landscape are South Africans, born of the land or travelling from different countries, who speak a multitude of languages and dialects, whether around kitchen tables or communal campfires, or from behind screens. Across the extremely unequal spaces of the country, many challenges threaten to pull communities apart, but the country is united in its ambitions to create a better future for all citizens and particularly for the children of the land.

Digital technologies have, to some extent, supported the disruption of the inequality of the country's schooling system towards achieving greater equity. At a farm school in the Northern Province, the nearby town's children are bussed to school, where the principal drives digital learning in classrooms and the computer lab, built despite the limited and unreliable internet access in the area. Near Beaufort West is a relatively large school where most learners have no adult caregivers, and permanently live in the school hostel; here, the Grade 7 teacher won a national technology prize for a public service video campaign he created with his Grade 7 learners about foetal alcohol syndrome. Similarly, in a school in the heart of the gang areas on the Cape Flats, technology integration thrives, and learners excel at maths completed on a weekly basis on tablets and desktop computers inside the safety of the school's walls. In these and many similar cases, the school's leadership drove innovation to ensure that learning can take place for the most vulnerable children. Despite the extremes and multiple examples of inequality in the country, digital learning in its many shapes and forms has the potential to create greater access to opportunities and life choices.

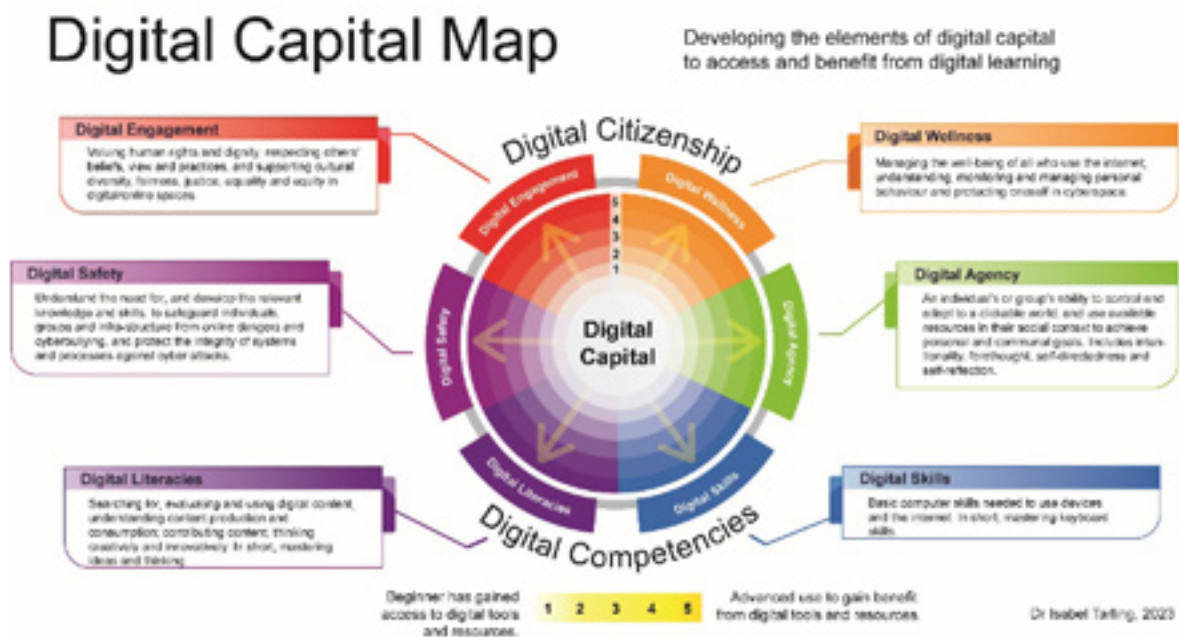
Digital learning in the country is strategically guided by the 2004 Draft White Paper on e-education, *Transforming Learning and Teaching through ICT*.¹ This document called for the development of norms and standards to guide and inform digital learning in South Africa's schools. During 2023 and 2024, the Digital Guidelines Development Project answered this call to action and oversaw the development of digital guidelines for learners, teachers, parents/caregivers and communities, school leaders and institutions. The digital guidelines built on the recommendations and guidelines from the 2004 Draft White Paper on eEducation to achieve four key goals:

- Articulate a shared vision for digital learning in South Africa's basic education sector.
- Clearly outline priorities, focus areas, and potential areas for development for different groups and stakeholders.
- Guide areas for investment of resources, time, and commitment at local, regional and provincial and/or national levels.
- Emphasise the importance of a whole-of-society approach to digital learning where all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the use of digital technologies, and how these can support and enhance learning at all levels, ages and stages.



The digital guidelines were co-created by almost 100 volunteers across the country as a nationally agreed framework to provide support and guidance for the digital learning journey of all South Africa's learners, parents/caregivers and community members, educators and school leaders. In March 2024, at the national Lekgotla (strategic meeting), the digital guidelines were presented to the education community and Minister Angie Motshekga, and accepted by the Department of Basic Education for adoption and roll-out.

Developing the digital guidelines for learners, educators and parents/caregivers and communities was considerably less complex than the process of developing guidelines for education leaders. The development of the guidelines followed a Delphi study methodology that involved two in-person workshops and 23 online consultations with the different interest groups. A literature review produced the input document that guided the first in-person workshop, which developed and gathered individual ideas and priorities for each group's digital guidelines. These ideas and priorities then guided the subsequent monthly online meetings where interest groups gathered around a shared Google Doc to discuss, write and validate the guidelines for each group. The semi-final draft digital guidelines were developed from these online interactions and presented at the last in-person workshops for validation, review and feedback. This led to the development of the finalised digital guidelines document:²



All the digital guidelines were created following the digital capital framework developed from the literature review. Accordingly, digital guidelines were created to address the development of digital competencies in terms of digital literacies and digital skills. The guidelines also address the development of competent digital citizens with knowledge and skills of digital/cyber safety, digital engagement, digital/cyber wellness and digital agency. The digital competencies are placed at the base of the circle to emphasise the foundational importance of developing digital skills and literacies that enable the development of digital citizenship. The graded colours of each segment of the circle represent the way in which digital learning can, at times, be weak in one area and strong in another. It also shows that areas of strength can move back to being weak when a new technology is introduced (for example, AI), and the person needs to learn new skills and ways to navigate this.

The digital guidelines for education leaders address the leader both in terms of their own knowledge, skills, digital competencies and citizenship, and their role in the organisation, including the responsibilities and leadership skills they need to create a digital learning environment for all users. The digital skills a school leader should develop relate to basic knowledge and understanding of hardware and software, skills to navigate digital tools and resources, and to learning about emerging technologies and the digital leadership skills required to lead digitally by example. In the role of school leader, digital skills relate to managing the development of the organisation's digital skills, leading the digital learning journey within the organisation, and embedding ways to measure progress towards achieving goals along the digital learning roadmap. One of the volunteer co-creators of the digital guidelines commented: 'The education leader doesn't necessarily need to have all the knowledge of each and every aspect of digital learning but should know where to get the information or at least have a way to get help when they need it.'

The digital guidelines for education leaders also addressed specific digital literacies, cyber safety for their personal and professional spaces, digital engagement, cyber wellness and digital agency.

The co-creation of the digital guidelines brought together role players from all walks of life, from teachers and principals to department officials, the British Council team, NGO leaders and businesses, parents and other interested parties. Their work in developing the digital guidelines provides South African schools and communities with a blueprint to help develop their unique digital learning roadmaps. Guided by their digital learning road map, each school can plot their goals and aspirations for all stakeholders' digital learning, and as emphasised by the volunteers who created these, school leadership can put succession planning in place to ensure sustainability of the digital learning project. Importantly, the digital guidelines document helps leaders at school, district or provincial level to specify how digital learning goals can be measured to determine impact and progress over time. More widely, businesses, public and private institutions and non-governmental organisations can use the digital guidelines to strategically develop skills in the education network, from pre-service teaching students, to support programmes to develop digital skills and/or literacies in communities or aftercare programmes. It is intended that the digital guidelines will be included in an updated version of the 2004 White Paper on e-Education and that they will be rolled out to schools across the country in 2024 and beyond.

- 1 Department of Education (2004). Draft White Paper on e-Education. Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/e-education1.pdf
- 2 Tarling, I. (2024) *Digital Guidelines for the Basic Education Sector of South Africa: Draft Guidelines*. Department of Basic Education in collaboration with the British Council. Available at: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/qdphz/vzvo/#p=4>



Instructional leadership: improving outcomes for all children

Dr Jane Doughty CBE

In their drive to raise standards, policymakers, school leaders and other educational professionals all recognise that the core purpose of the school is to provide a learning environment that enables all learners to achieve their potential.

The quality of school leadership, at headship, deputy and middle¹ leadership levels, is critical to achieving this enabling environment and to continuously improving student outcomes.

As Leithwood et al. state: 'School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.'^{2,3} The same authors also highlight the kind of leadership that impacts most significantly on student outcomes: 'Successful school leadership focuses on ... developing teachers' skills, providing instructional support [and] monitoring student learning.' Therefore, the school's ability to improve and sustain student outcomes is dependent on its approach to instructional leadership.

This chapter will:

- explore instructional leadership – both its definitions and significance
- consider how instructional leadership can be promoted and developed in different school contexts.

Why is instructional leadership important?

Instructional leadership is not a new idea. The concept dates to the 1960s and over subsequent decades has become one of the most commonly researched models of educational leadership. As Hallinger⁴ and Gumus et al.⁵ argue, the increased interest in instructional leadership from 2005 onwards has been influenced by accountability demands and the global drive to improve outcomes for young people.

And it's clear that in many jurisdictions, policymakers and other educationists place importance on ensuring principals⁶ and other school leaders give sufficient priority to improving teaching and learning and can achieve an appropriate balance between leading teaching and learning and their administrative tasks.

The common theme to emerge from studies in the 1960s and 1970s was that an effective school leader was someone who focused on teaching and learning, providing direction and working hard to improve instructional practices. Individual researchers tended to report on specific strategies, for example, assessing the quality of instruction, giving feedback to teachers, providing support to improve teaching or monitoring student progress and setting targets for improvement.

According to Gumus et al.,⁷ it wasn't until the 1980s that more holistic models of instructional leadership started to emerge. They note that Hallinger and Murphy's 1985 model is the most frequently cited, which breaks instructional leadership down into three main components:

1. **Defining the school mission** – identifying and communicating the school's goals.
2. **Managing the instructional programme** – co-ordinating the curriculum, supervising and assessing teaching and monitoring student progress.
3. **Promoting a positive school learning climate** – protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, maintaining academic standards and maintaining high visibility.

While this earlier research into instructional leadership was mostly principal-centred, a more diverse understanding of instructional leadership, taking account of the contribution made by senior and middle leaders, has emerged in recent years. As has new terminology, including 'leadership of teaching and learning',⁸ 'learning-centred leadership'⁹ and 'pedagogical leadership'.¹⁰

According to the OECD,¹¹ instructional leadership generally refers to the efforts of the principal to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Expressions like 'leadership for learning', however, incorporate wider school leadership and draw heavily on aspects of instructional leadership.

The OECD¹² also defines the leadership of teaching and learning through five domains of action:

1. A focus on learning
2. Monitoring teaching and learning
3. Building learning communities
4. Acquiring and allocating resources
5. Maintaining a safe and effective learning environment.

This definition is similar to Hallinger and Murphy's model, with an additional emphasis on building learning communities.

Irrespective of the names given (which are frequently used interchangeably), this type of leadership refers to activities that support and develop high-quality instructional practices, develop and implement policies that support student achievement, develop learning communities, provide feedback on instruction, model effective instruction and support the use of assessment data. Such activities may primarily be the responsibility of the principal or delegated to other leaders at the school.

School principals should, of course, have a broad repertoire of leadership approaches at their disposal, adapting their behaviour to achieve the required outcomes. Hitt and Tucker¹³ maintain that a combination of instructional and transformational leadership brings out the best results. Transformational leadership emphasises how change and improvement can be achieved through a powerful vision that inspires and motivates others to create a better future. Leithwood et al.,¹⁴ however, highlight the importance of instructional leadership and distributed leadership.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address issues in relation to definition, but it is something school leaders and policymakers may wish to consider. Our focus here is on the instructional leadership of the principal, although consideration will be given to how principals can work with other school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

This chapter will use the following definition of instructional leadership:

- **Defining the school vision and mission** – framing and communicating goals and desired outcomes (compatible with national ambitions and priorities).
- **Managing the instructional (teaching) programme** – co-ordinating and developing the curriculum; overseeing, assessing, improving and developing teaching; and monitoring student learning and progress.
- **Promoting a positive learning climate and culture** – organising professional development focused on teaching and learning, maintaining high visibility around the school and in classrooms, establishing and maintaining standards, protecting teaching time and encouraging a collaborative culture.



Why is instructional leadership important?

All jurisdictions clearly want their principals to be excellent leaders – but what difference does excellence actually make to pupils? Research methodologies like longitudinal studies, stronger quantitative methods, advanced statistical analysis and large-scale studies have, over the past decade, strengthened the quality of evidence generated from educational research. These advances allow for more robust links to be made between a principal's leadership and student outcomes, as well as demonstrating the leadership aspects that are important to raising standards.

In a meta-analysis of 69 studies (involving 14,000 practitioners and 1.4 million pupils), Marzano, Waters and McNulty¹⁵ claim that replacing an average principal with an outstanding principal in an average school could increase student achievement by over 20 percentile points.

For those who may be sceptical of these high-level, quantitative analytical research programmes, a McKinsey qualitative study¹⁶ reviewed eight high-performing countries (identified using international test results and other data) and considered the leadership of the top 15 per cent. They concluded: 'School principals in high-performing systems devote around 80 per cent of their time [to] improving instruction (teaching and learning).' This finding is supported by the OECD,¹⁷ which claims: 'Instructional leadership actions are amongst the strongest predictors of performance.' So, clearly, excellent leadership, and particularly excellent instructional leadership, is crucial to improving outcomes.

After an in-depth analysis of the activities of high-performing principals, McKinsey concluded that these activities can be placed in the realms of instructional leadership. These activities include:

- walking the school
- understanding what constitutes effective teaching and learning
- spending time improving teaching and learning
- coaching and developing teachers
- spending time with students.

Interestingly, these principals also demonstrate an enjoyment of teaching.

The principals in McKinsey's sample clearly direct their thinking and leadership actions towards the goal of continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. These findings are supported by Viviane Robinson,¹⁸ who considered factors that affect student outcomes and concluded:

The more leaders focus on their relationships, their work and their own learning about the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes.

In another study, Robinson and her colleagues¹⁹ identified five leadership behaviours that positively affect student outcomes, all of which link to instructional leadership due to their focus on enabling teachers to perform at their best. One of these behaviours – leading and participating in teacher learning and development – has significantly more impact than the rest.

But how do leaders actually improve outcomes? We know from research that, in the main, a principal's actions have an 'indirect' influence on student outcomes. As Day et al. note, such activities include defining the vision and values, improving conditions for teaching and learning, and building relationships inside and outside of the school community.



There are, however, some actions principals can take to directly influence outcomes:

- Focusing their strategic thinking, decision making and policy development on teaching and learning.
- Planning effectively, setting appropriate priorities for improvement and facilitating appropriate teacher professional development.
- Securing and allocating resources to achieve maximum outcomes.
- Organising the school so it runs safely, efficiently and effectively.
- Creating a collaborative, open culture with ‘can-do’ mindsets – delegating effectively and developing school leadership.

In the updated version of *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*, Leithwood et al.²⁰ added parents to the list of people principals should influence, by ‘encouraging parent/child interactions in the home that further enhance student success at school’.

This has proven particularly important during Covid-19 lockdowns, where, globally, millions of children have been educated at home, with or without virtual school support.

There are several indirect actions principals can take or delegate to other school leaders, including:

- **leading by example** – modelling behaviours that reinforce the value of teaching and learning
- **creating the culture** – using the language of success, praising staff and students, believing all students can succeed and reinforcing good habits like punctuality and routines for getting students to start working promptly at the beginning of lessons
- **developing monitoring and evaluation systems** – analysing data, observing teaching, monitoring student progress, holding focus groups with parents and students, providing feedback questionnaires and conducting learning walks
- **working with teachers** – providing professional development sessions, mentoring and coaching, and promoting collaboration, the sharing of practice and innovative approaches, and joint lesson planning
- **contact with students** – visiting and observing lessons, talking with students about their learning and using assessment data to track progress.

Today, it is understood that the effectiveness of a principal’s instructional leadership can have a positive impact on student outcomes, and its significance cannot be overestimated.

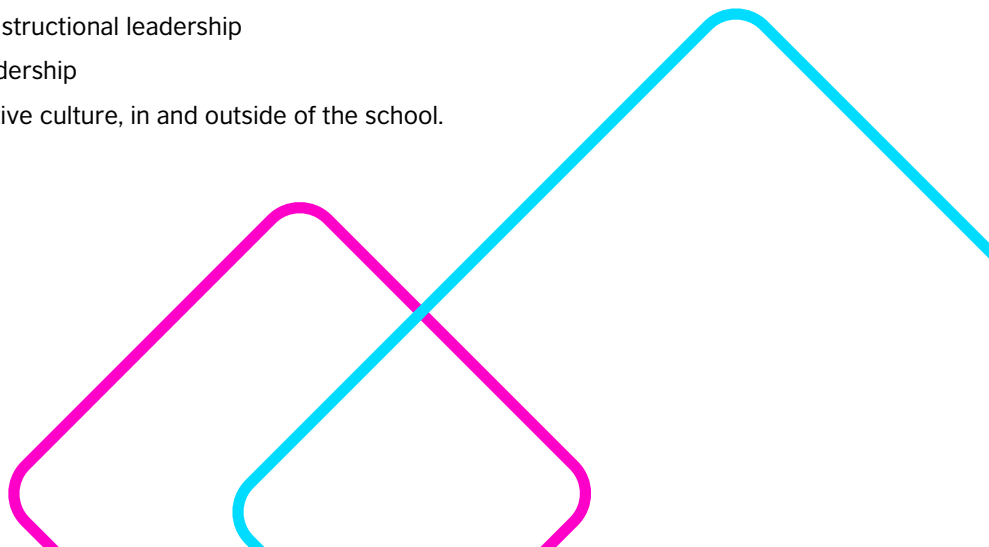
Now we will consider how instructional leadership can be encouraged and developed in schools.

How can instructional leadership be promoted, supported and developed in different school contexts?

Policymakers, principals and educational advisers all have a role to play in raising student outcomes through actions that promote, support and develop instructional leadership in schools. What actions can be taken will vary according to context, whether that’s the national, regional or individual school context, and what works in one context may not be ‘the answer’ in another context. The strategies and suggestions presented here are, therefore, posed as questions for you to consider in your drive to improve educational outcomes for your own learners.

School leaders generally influence student outcomes through indirect means, so this section will explore instructional leadership in relation to four key behaviours:

1. Authority, autonomy and accountability
2. Understanding and practising instructional leadership
3. Developing and distributing leadership
4. Building an open and collaborative culture, in and outside of the school.



Authority, autonomy and accountability

Effective instructional leadership depends on school leaders having sufficient autonomy to make decisions about certain aspects of school life. A useful example is the freedom and funding to organise professional development for staff. If principals are responsible for overseeing professional development programmes, it is more likely that the topics and activities will be relevant to their schools' improvement priorities.

Given the authority and the discretion to organise the school in a way that will support and promote student achievement, principals can take into account their local context, student intake and teaching staff. Some governments give principals significant autonomy and authority to lead and manage their schools, but this is not the case in many jurisdictions.

In 2020, the OECD²¹ found that in over 40 per cent of publicly funded schools, leaders do not have significant authority over many tasks relating to staffing, budget, school policies and curriculum policies, concluding that this clearly hinders their ability to be effective instructional leaders. Policymakers wishing to strengthen leadership in general, and instructional leadership in particular, could identify the aspects of a principal's role that hinder their ability to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

As circumstances can vary across regions, it is also useful to consider how local autonomy might provide more flexibility to adapt to a school's local needs and constraints.

While varying across jurisdictions, modern-day teaching can be a demanding and challenging role. Pressures can arise both from within the school and from the wider community. Increased public accountability, the impact of social media, a lack of resources, and large class sizes are some areas that teachers cite as additional challenges.

In the 48 countries participating in the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), only 78 per cent of a typical lesson is dedicated to teaching, with the remainder of the time spent keeping order or dealing with administrative tasks. And in around half of these countries, this figure represents a decrease in teaching and learning time over the last five to ten years.²² And, as Coe et al.²³ state: 'The core business of teaching matters more than anything else in a school.'

A principal's role is to create the working conditions that ensure the smooth running of the school, removing barriers and protecting teachers from distractions beyond the classroom to allow them to perform at their best and, thus, improve student outcomes. A principal's ability to achieve this depends on the opportunities they have for discretionary decision making and sharing leadership with others, such as deputy principals and heads of department.

In cases where both the principal's and teachers' views on the importance of leading teaching and learning align, the principal has usually had training in school leadership, has high levels of autonomy in staffing, budgeting and instructional policies, and has a variety of beliefs about instruction and organisational innovativeness.²⁴

Points to consider

- In what ways and to what extent does your system emphasise instructional leadership (through, for example, policies, infrastructure, job descriptions and leadership standards), and how does the accountability process endorse a principal's role in leading teaching and learning and their responsibility for student outcomes?
- What degree of authority and autonomy do principals have so they can make decisions regarding, for example, the organisation of their schools, employing teachers, and monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching?



Understanding and practising instructional leadership

Knowledge of instructional leadership among principals is high. The OECD²⁵ found that more than 80 per cent of principals who participated in TALIS had attended training focused on instructional leadership. This is welcome news, and may reflect the current prominence given to this form of leadership by researchers, ministers and other educationists globally. It may also reflect the priority identified in many national plans to improve student outcomes.

Knowledge is one thing; practice is another. Studies have consistently shown that principals spend a significant amount of time doing a range of tasks other than those related to instructional leadership. In 2007, a study from the National College for School Leadership²⁶ found that principals in England spend 25 per cent of their time on administration and a similar percentage on managing external stakeholders. In a 2012 study, Earley²⁷ reported that newly appointed principals in England spend 46 per cent of their time on management, 17 per cent on administration and 32 per cent on all leadership tasks, including instructional leadership.

More up-to-date analyses do not appear to indicate these figures have changed significantly. The OECD's TALIS²⁸ found that, on average, across the 48 participating countries, principals spend just 16 per cent of their working time on curriculum- and teaching-related tasks and meetings. This is the third most time-consuming task for principals, after administrative tasks and meetings (30 per cent) and leadership tasks and meetings (21 per cent). Principals maintain this is insufficient time for these crucial activities.

In the same study, 65 per cent of principals stated that they frequently reviewed school administrative procedures and reports, while 42 per cent said they often spent time having to fix issues with lesson timetables. So, it does appear that other urgent (and sometimes less important) activities can make disproportionate demands on principals' time.

Whatever the extent, a high proportion of principals do, however, engage in important instructional leadership tasks, for example, ensuring that:

- teachers feel responsible for their students' learning outcomes (68 per cent)
- teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching skills (63 per cent)
- teachers are encouraged to collaborate to develop new teaching practices (59 per cent).

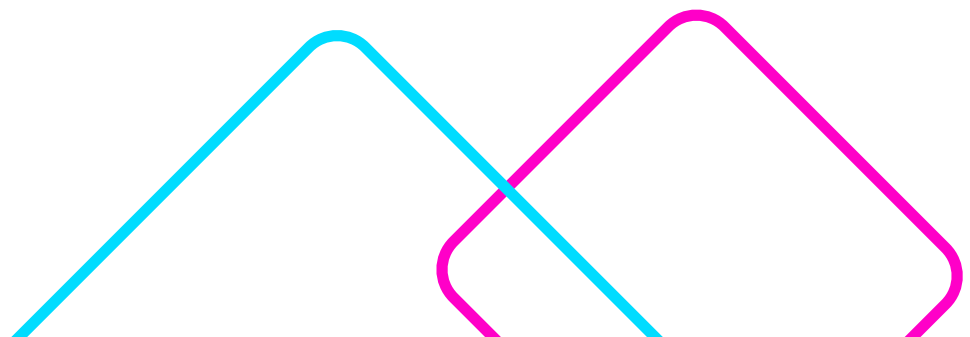
Principals are keen to engage in more instructional leadership, so must find ways to change their working habits. School leadership structures can make a significant difference to how instructional leadership operates. Within senior leadership teams (deputy principals, senior teachers) administrative responsibilities can be delegated to team members to free up time for the principal to engage in other activities. Equally, team members can be asked to take on instructional leadership responsibilities, with the principal retaining overall accountability. In secondary schools, heads of subject can be the most appropriate individuals to take responsibility for the quality of teaching and student progress in their area. Their instructional leadership performance can be overseen by a deputy or the principal.

Time is frequently mentioned as a constraint. One option to free up time for school leaders could be for education systems and school management boards to create intermediate management roles, giving teachers and other staff responsibility for areas like school buildings, school transport and day-to-day budget management.

If principals are to spend more time on instructional leadership activities, their curriculum, pedagogical and assessment expertise needs to be up to date.

Points to consider

- What kind of priority is given to instructional leadership in professional development programmes, at both national and local levels, for all school leaders, including aspiring/serving principals and aspiring leaders?
- How much working time do you, as a principal, devote to instructional leadership activities? What do you do, and what kind of value do your actions add to improving student outcomes?
- What evidence and information is used to judge whether a school and its school leadership are excellent, and how much of this evidence relates to instructional leadership?



Developing and distributing leadership

If principals wish to promote the practice of, and engage others in, instructional leadership, they must make 'leadership' a wider school activity, rather than something restricted to themselves or a small group of individuals. Being able to distribute leadership is essential for principals wanting to lead their schools effectively.

School leadership can have an especially positive influence on school and student outcomes when it is distributed.²⁹ Distributed leadership can also have a positive impact on staff – Hulpia, Devos and Van Keer report that teachers are more committed to the school when informal leadership responsibilities are distributed or shared according to expertise.³⁰

An important aspect of instructional leadership is monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching. Provided they receive training and have the appropriate skills, heads of subject are in a good position to undertake this task – they know the curriculum, understand assessment requirements and can provide appropriate ongoing support to develop and improve teaching. They are also well-placed to promote other important behaviours, such as punctuality and providing stimulating starts and ends of lessons.

The best way to develop leadership capacity is to give teachers concrete opportunities to develop their leadership skills, such as analysing student data, observing teaching, and reviewing students' work. Success depends on the time and effort principals give to supporting teachers and delegating appropriate instructional leadership-related activities. Aspiring instructional leaders will need support to develop skills to do important tasks like observing teaching, giving accurate and developmental feedback to teachers and monitoring student progress, over the short, medium and long term. Such delegation allows principals to engage in strategic matters, such as embedding the school's vision, curriculum design and teacher development, as well as building leadership capacity throughout the school and providing individual opportunities to further staff's professional expertise.

Principals can develop leadership through processes like mentoring and coaching, which help teachers to develop their skills and confidence to undertake new and sometimes challenging leadership tasks. While school principals generally consider mentoring and coaching to be important for teachers' work and students' performance, TALIS³¹ found that only 22 per cent of new teachers have an assigned mentor. And considering mentoring is considered to be a crucial practice at this stage of a teacher's career, mentoring and coaching for experienced teachers may be even less common.

It is clear principals have insufficient time to be solely responsible for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning. And neither should they be – others have a great deal of expertise to offer and can make a significant contribution to school improvement.

Points to consider

- What enablers will allow principals to distribute leadership formally and informally so they can involve the wider staff in the processes of leading teaching and learning? Are there any barriers?
- How do you, as a principal, create leadership development opportunities for your staff, and which approaches have been the most successful? Have these included leading teaching and learning, and, if so, how has this affected student learning and outcomes?



Building a collaborative culture, both in and outside of the school

A principal's values, attitudes and behaviours matter a great deal. These will establish a culture in the school that has the potential to motivate and influence teachers, thus raising their commitment to the job. Principals must be excellent communicators, with strong interpersonal skills, so they are able to communicate their beliefs and values to inspire trust, strengthen motivation and gain commitment from the wider school community. Of the teachers who participated in TALIS,³² 90 per cent stated that an important reason they became a teacher was to have an opportunity to influence learners' development. Principals should capitalise on this by creating a culture that will sustain teachers' motivation, so they remain committed to this important aspiration.

How teachers (and learners) feel about their working environment is crucial to their performance. Effective leadership of teaching and learning that really does benefit students will only happen with strong collaboration between members of the school community. Collaboration develops in a culture of trust, transparency and openness – and when principals involve staff, students and parents in the life of the school in an authentic and purposeful way. As the most important role model, the principal should model values and behaviours that build trust and reflect best practice relating to leading teaching and learning. The principal's behaviour will have a significant impact on the whole school community, including parents. Our memory of what people do lasts much longer than our memory of what they say!

In their analysis of highly effective leadership, Leithwood et al.³³ report a number of leadership behaviours that help to build a collaborative culture across the school community:

- modelling the school's values and practices
- building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents
- structuring the organisation to facilitate collaboration
- building productive relationships with families and communities
- connecting the school to its wider environment.

These behaviours also contribute to delivering equity across the school, so all students can make the most of educational opportunities.

Developing a collaborative culture is an ambition in many schools, and teachers say that professional development based on collaborative approaches to teaching has a positive impact on the quality of their own teaching. It encourages peer observations, joint lesson planning, the sharing of resources, and professional discussions about pedagogy. Such training opportunities, however, are not widespread. With only 44 per cent of teachers, globally, reporting they have had opportunities to engage in training based on peer learning and networking, there remains a significant proportion of teachers who would benefit from such professional development.³⁴

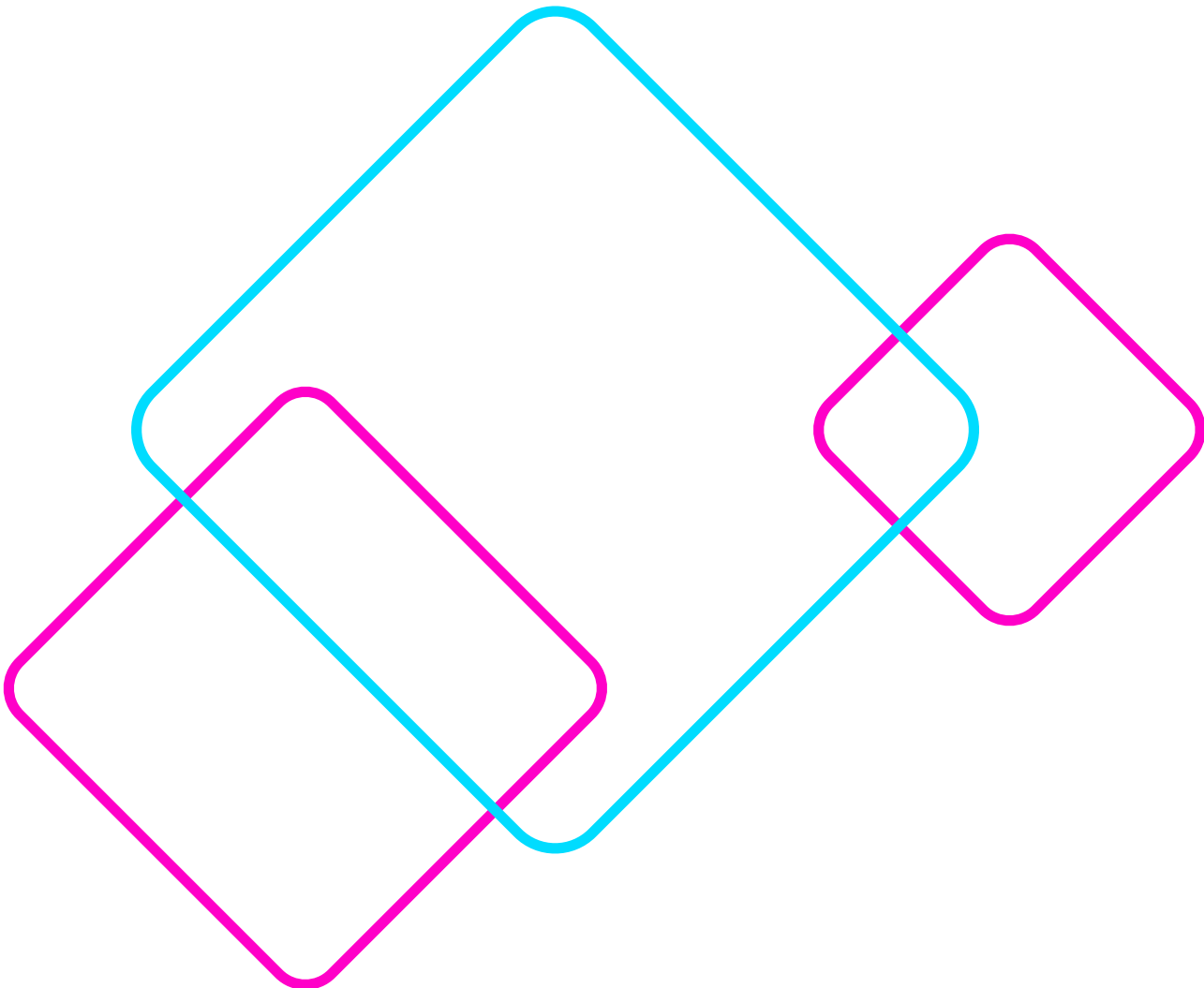
School leadership also improves teaching and learning by encouraging parent–child interactions in the home that further enhance student success at school.³⁵ Such interactions can only be encouraged and developed if parents feel the school is open, transparent and inclusive. All staff have an important role to play, although the principal sets the tone by welcoming parents and other members of the community into the school, determining how they will be involved in relevant discussions and showing how their contributions are valued.

Points to consider

- How does your system support and promote collaboration between schools, and how does it identify and embed best practice in leading teaching and learning?
- As a principal, how would you describe your school culture? What would staff, students and parents say? What actions are needed to create a more collaborative and inclusive culture?
- How does policy at national, local and school levels promote parental and community engagement with schools, and in what ways could these policies be developed to improve student outcomes?

Education can transform lives. Countries across the globe are focused on improving outcomes for their children and young people, so the time they spend in school is beneficial and enjoyable. Effective instructional leadership in each school and across a system will help this ambition become a reality.

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The school leader's role as the fulcrum of the community: the Kenyan context

Samuel Marigat, County Director, Teachers Service Commission in Kisumu County, Kenya

The evolution of school leadership

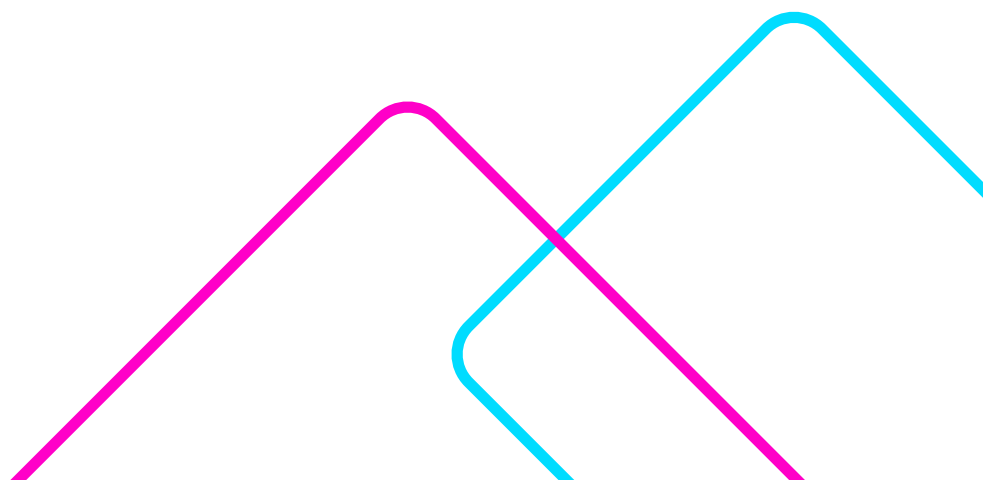
In Kenya, the title of school leader has evolved from headmaster/headmistress before independence, to the gender sensitive headteacher after independence to principal, then head of institution, and now school leader. Similarly, over the years, the role of the school leader has undergone a significant transformation to reflect the changing needs and complexities of the education system as well as the changing demands of wider society.^{1,2} A modern school leader is expected to have a diverse set of competencies and perform as a chief executive officer, financial officer, public relations officer, community liaison, role model, politician and human resources officer. The school leader is the heartbeat and nexus of the school,³ they are the fulcrum on which all the critical activities of the school pivot.

Instructional leaders

The Teachers Service Commission Act (2012)⁴ defines a headteacher as, 'The lead educator ... appointed by the Commission as such and responsible for the implementation of educational policy guidelines and professional practices.' This definition underscores instructional leadership as the most important role of a school leader. To achieve the curriculum's effectiveness, an instructional leader must wear several hats including being a manager, administrator, guide and mentor for teachers and students.⁵ He or she must guide and support the teaching staff to deliver effective curricula and improve learner outcomes. This includes setting high expectations for teaching and learning, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement and ensuring that resources and support are in place to enable effective instruction.⁶ Teachers need to be supported in their professional development and be encouraged to be innovative and use locally available resources to ensure learners receive quality education with only modest physical and financial resources at their disposal.

School leaders should ensure that teachers utilise the curriculum designs developed by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). Further, teachers should adequately prepare their own professional documents and use them in teaching and learning. Teachers should also be appointed an appropriate mentor and coach so they can effectively be supported in line with the Teacher Induction Mentorship and Coaching policy. Moreover, the school leader should ensure that teachers are appraised termly as guided by the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development process (TPAD) and feedback shared efficiently and effectively. He or she should also monitor and evaluate school assessments and make data-driven decisions.

Of all the roles a school leader performs, instructional leadership is perhaps the most important and the most valued by the community, which will judge a school on the quality of its learning outcomes, with parents even rejecting a school leader entirely if they feel their children are performing poorly under their leadership. Philip Hallinger aptly summarises why the school leader is key in school performance. He argues, 'I have never seen a good school with a poor principal or a poor school with a good principal. I have seen unsuccessful schools turned around into successful ones and, regrettably outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline. In each case the rise or fall could be readily traced to the quality of the principal.'⁷



The vision carrier

To make any meaningful impact, the school leader has to embrace the community, value it sincerely, and establish a genuine partnership. Since schools are embedded in the community, school leaders have to support, cope with, or react to the socio-economic changes within it.⁸ The school's learners come from this community and they will go back there as 'finished products' to serve the same community socially and professionally.

Once assured of support, the school leader can now see and help shape the future of the community through its learners. School leaders are responsible for setting up the vision, mission and goals of the school, thus providing a clear path and direction for the school to follow. To transform society, the school leader must have a compelling vision and serve selflessly. This is particularly the case in challenging settings such as informal settlements or dispersed rural areas where education might not be the main priority. It is often necessary for the school leader to go above and beyond what might be considered their job description in order to get children in to school and keep them on roll. This might involve providing basic sanitary products, or a snack or meal, especially if the only meal learners can depend upon receiving is from the school's feeding programme. In order to learn, children must be in school, so it is vital that school leaders work as hard as possible to enable this to happen.

Effective school leaders are those who can successfully translate the vision and mission of their institutions into tangible outcomes.⁹ Hanna Kurland and colleagues argue that school leaders who possess a clear and compelling vision for their schools are better equipped to inspire and motivate their staff, students, and community to work collaboratively towards common goals.¹⁰ School leaders who have walked this path know it is a very satisfying journey because they are not just teachers, or leaders of teachers, but have influence which extends well beyond the academic realm. Further, by fostering strong relationships with parents, community organisations and local government, their schools will experience sustainable growth.

Inclusion champions

Oprah Winfrey argued, 'Education is the way to move mountains, to build bridges, to change the world.' Inclusion in education refers to creating a learning environment where all learners, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances, are welcomed, supported, and provided with equal opportunities to enjoy their learning and succeed.¹¹ SDG 4 targets that by 2030 we should have eliminated gender disparities and ensured equal access to all levels of education for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. School leaders are at the heart of achieving this target because the implementation happens within the school and community.

Consequently, the school leader needs to set the tone and policies of an inclusive school culture, encourage diversity, promote respect and understanding among staff and learners and equip teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills. Further, the school leader needs to ensure the learning environment is conducive to effective education for all learners. Most importantly, the school leader needs to be an inclusion champion and serve as a missionary by creating outreach programmes for the identification and support of learners with special needs and those in vulnerable situations. The school leader must be a role model and lead by example in word and deed.

A school leader's role extends far beyond the confines of the school grounds. As a leading and influential member of the community, they should use this position to ensure learners thrive, both academically and socially.



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The school leader's role in creating inclusive education in Lebanon

Hilda Khoury, Director of Counselling and Guidance, Ministry of Education, Lebanon

Introduction

Inclusive education lacks a universal model due to its dynamic nature, influenced by diverse cultural, social and institutional contexts worldwide. Educational approaches, resources and philosophies vary across countries, preventing a one-size-fits-all solution. Incorporating special needs students into regular schools and classrooms – a concept known as inclusive education – is steadily becoming more widely embraced, although its implementation varies. Legal frameworks, funding, teacher training and societal attitudes play crucial roles, which means each country views inclusive education in a different way. Some countries categorise it in a medical way while others follow a pedagogical approach. It is also important to note that to be able to provide the required support there are some individual interventions and approaches that need to be implemented based on diverse special needs. However, every country that has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) should abide by its guidance.

Global perspectives on inclusive education

The absence of a singular model underscores the need for tailored support in this multifaceted field. In Lebanon, education actors at all levels agree on the importance of inclusive education to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and provide access to quality education for all students.

Models and initiatives for inclusive education

Before developing an inclusive education model, it is crucial to conduct research on the various existing models available globally as well as reports from renowned organisations such as UNESCO, the British Council, or UNICEF.

Since 2013, the British Council has promoted research on inclusive education, emphasising the importance of providing quality education for all, regardless of individual differences and abilities. Their research supports the view that inclusive education is not just a matter of policy but a fundamental human right. It encompasses the belief that all students, including those with special needs, should have access to educational settings and benefit from a diverse and supportive learning environment which will enable them to be included in, and beyond, their communities. The British Council's research emphasises the need for comprehensive policies, teacher training and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. To be able to do this effectively, it is essential for all stakeholders – schools, parents, and communities – to understand the concept of inclusive education. The work of the British Council underlines the idea that inclusion is not only about access but also about creating an environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential. This is directly linked to SDG4, which states there is a need to give access to quality education for all students in an equitable manner.



This is reflected in UNESCO's 2022 report, *Promoting the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities in education in the Arab region*, which clearly states that 'children with disabilities have the right to receive their education in mainstream settings'.¹ This has sparked a challenge to create an inclusive education system in mainstream settings where children with special needs can pursue their education. Consequently, inclusion has evolved from being a discretionary choice to an imperative, and nations that have signed the UNCRPD should strive to realign their policies, structures and practices in accordance with the principles of inclusion and equity. UNESCO's guidance suggests that inclusion and equity should be regarded as fundamental principles that underpin all educational policies, rather than being treated as separate policies in themselves. As set out in the UNESCO report, enhancing educational systems necessitates fostering partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in the education of all learners, with the goal of optimising the use of existing resources, whether they are human, financial, or material. This necessitated the development of a national education strategy at country level that leverages existing resources to reform educational systems at the governmental, community and school levels.

The social model of disability and global challenges

A well-known, evidence-based model which can be used when examining inclusive education is the social model of disability. This model aims to modify society to be inclusive of people living with disabilities, rather than expecting people with disabilities to individually make adjustments to their own lives to fit in. It advocates the belief that people with special needs deserve the right to fully participate as equal citizens alongside others. By employing the social model of disability, we can examine the external obstacles that individuals with special needs face, and which can directly affect their inclusion or exclusion from education. This, in turn, should influence how we address the challenges confronting individuals with special needs and in other vulnerable groups, as well as the way we approach these people in policy and documentation. This includes the language we use, which has a significant impact and reveals our understanding of what and where these barriers are. Central to any progress is the availability of data and information that measures it, which must accurately reflect the reality of the population it represents.

Inclusive education initiatives in Lebanon

In Lebanon prior to 2018 there were several schools (public and private) and partners which were trying to implement inclusion, but there was no unified model for inclusive schools. In 2017, the inclusive education project was launched at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in an attempt to unify these efforts. This included reviewing published research, and all the reports previously completed by the MEHE and the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), as well as holding several meetings with relevant stakeholders in the field.

In 2018, the MEHE and CERD, in collaboration with UNICEF, launched the pilot inclusive education programme with 30 public schools across Lebanon. The goal of the programme was to raise awareness of the right to inclusive education, the variety of opportunities created by inclusion, and the necessity of school-family partnerships, among families, caregivers, decision-makers and community leaders, and also to enhance universal school attendance. Through the inclusive education project, the MEHE aimed to encourage autonomy and independence through education for children with special needs, paving the way for a more economically productive future. The project was based on the Multi-Tiered System of Support theoretical model (MTSS) and was implemented based on the following approach: a special educator was to be present in the school full-time and a team of paraprofessionals was to visit the school twice a week. Meanwhile, educational materials – provided by external partners – were made available in schools to raise awareness, and CERD, a key partner to the MEHE in this project, was to train the entire school staff. In parallel, the Department of Counselling and Guidance (DOPS) in the MEHE had meetings with parents and school staff to promote community involvement in inclusive education. During the 2021–22 academic year, the number of inclusive public schools in the pilot programme was increased from 30 to 60.

To achieve SDG4 and develop the vision of inclusive education in Lebanon, the MEHE contacted and visited other countries that had already worked on this topic, such as the UK, Portugal, France and the USA. The aim was to contextualise the vision of inclusive education already present in the world and examine the structures and theories which underpinned success in other settings.

The training of the team and school staff was a major component of the project implemented by CERD and some workshops were completed with the support of the British Council. Moreover, two universities are key partners in this project: Université Saint Joseph (USJ), tasked to train the multidisciplinary teams, and Haigazian University which conducted research in parallel with the pilot project in the 30 initial public schools and provided the MEHE with key insights. In 2023, after several scale-up processes, and with the continued support of the two universities, the number of inclusive public schools reached 110.

The role of the school principal

It is important to highlight that school principals play a crucial role in co-ordinating the implementation of inclusive education at school level and ensuring the provision of quality education, thereby fostering equity for all learners. Principals involved in the programme, after receiving training and coaching, became more actively engaged, and emerged as key advocates for inclusive education within the school and the broader community. They were also eager to transform their school environments into inclusive spaces. This underscores the need for ongoing training, capacity building, and coaching for school principals, as well as the importance of providing additional motivation. This could include involving them in planning for inclusive education, encouraging continuous collaboration with the MEHE on related issues, or offering other forms of support at school level.

The Development of the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

Based on the challenges and achievements of the initial project, the MEHE, with the technical support of UNICEF, developed the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs, alongside a roadmap to provide a comprehensive framework for the further development and implementation of inclusive education. The policy was developed through a consultative process involving a wide range of stakeholders working in inclusion. The process began in February 2022 with the support of national and international consultants. From March to December 2022, a series of in-depth consultations, both in person and online, was organised to collect detailed information on the status of inclusive education in Lebanon, develop a general vision for the policy, reach agreements on the aims, commitments and intervention areas, develop a framework for the policy, and co-write sections collaboratively. Sections of the Inclusive Education Policy document were shared and discussed in-depth with various stakeholders based on their mandates with respect to inclusion in education. As a result, modifications were made to ensure the policy reflects the visions and commitments of stakeholders and government partners and is contextualised and realistic. A further updated draft of the policy was presented in December 2022 and then finalised through a series of consultative workshops, focus group discussions and stakeholder reviews between January and May 2023. The policy was launched in June 2023.

Innovative solutions in Lebanon: the hub school concept and curriculum reform

Despite the progress achieved in inclusive education, significant challenges remain, both in Lebanon and at a global level. The debate surrounding inclusive education persists, yet there are notable instances of challenges in relation to the placement of children with more complex needs. In some countries, the MEHE team observed that students with complex needs have been placed in dedicated departments within inclusive schools or specialist institutions. This challenge is a major discussion point where several countries exchanged expertise and benefited accordingly.



Based on the pilot study, from 2018 until 2022, it was apparent that support in the inclusive schools was being provided for all learners with mild to moderate special needs, while children with severe learning difficulties required additional attention and resources. The MEHE considered transforming all schools in Lebanon to welcome children with complex special needs, but after thorough consideration it was concluded that this won't be feasible due to the costs it would entail. Since the original plan was to be able to support as many children as possible with the available resources, the MEHE is currently seeking to establish hub schools as a potential solution.

One inclusive school will be selected in each caza (region) based on specific criteria related to technical and logistical specifications. The MEHE will provide this hub school with additional educational, human and financial resources to be able to cater for complex cases and for learners who need additional targeted support to ensure they receive the quality education they are entitled to. The staff in these schools, including the multidisciplinary teams, will receive additional targeted training to be able to support a larger number of learners with a greater variety of needs. The teams in these hub schools will then be able to visit other schools in the caza and provide support. This will ensure that all children, regardless of the complexity of their need, are enrolled in an inclusive public school and are able to receive the support necessary for them to access quality education. This will ensure all children can choose the school they want in the caza close to their home. The MEHE aims to ensure that children with special needs can attend a school near their home that is adapted to their needs, instead of potentially having to move house to access a suitable school.

The hub school pilot is currently being tested; out of the first 30 inclusive public schools, the MEHE has selected three schools as hub schools and provided them with additional resources. With the aim of transforming all the schools in Lebanon into inclusive ones by 2030, the MEHE seeks to have at least one school in each caza providing additional support to learners with complex needs.

The MEHE is also collaborating with CERD on curriculum reform to ensure that it is inclusive. The inclusion committee developed guidelines on inclusive curricula, inclusive assessments and inclusive school criteria, which will help ensure that no child is excluded.

Fostering a global culture of inclusivity and conclusion

To help implement quality education for all, a culture of inclusivity should be fostered at all levels, with the key aim of promoting an inclusive mindset nationally. This journey begins with fostering inclusivity within our educational systems to ensure the provision of quality inclusive education for all. It is essential to not make the learner adapt to the school, but rather have the school adapt to the learner and their needs. Inclusion isn't merely a fixed goal, it is an ongoing process, and as the MEHE works to establish inclusive settings, a process of continuous research, learning and evolution in understanding inclusion is underway.

Although each country will adapt and implement its inclusive education system based on their specific context, and there is no secret recipe for instant success, there is always a need to exchange experiences and best practices to be able to provide quality inclusive education for all learners.

1 Khochen-Bagshaw, M. (2022). Promoting the inclusion of children and young people in education in the Arab region. UNESDOC Digital Library.



Section two:

Supporting the development of school leaders



The necessity for continuous professional development for school principals in Lebanon

Professor Hyam Ishac, President, Center for Educational Research and Development

Mr Akram Sabek, Secretary-General, Curriculum Development Committees, and Senior Expert in Educational Management and Leadership

Mrs Tasama Saleh, member of the Joint Academic Departments, Department of Sciences, Center of Educational Research and Development

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape, continuous professional development (CPD) for school principals in Lebanon is not merely beneficial – it is essential. As leaders of educational institutions, school principals play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education, fostering positive school climates, and ensuring the implementation of effective teaching and learning practices. The challenges they face are multifaceted, ranging from navigating educational reforms to addressing the diverse needs of students and staff. A lack of structured professional development opportunities has led the leaders of many public schools to rely on outdated methods, thus limiting their access to innovative practices. This gap has hindered their ability to lead effectively, adapt to changes, and foster conducive learning environments.

The field of education is constantly shifting, with new teaching methods, technologies, and policies emerging regularly. It is vital for school principals to stay up to date with these developments, as effective educational and school administration is crucial to progress. Many countries have focused on supporting research, implementing modern approaches and strategies, and placing a strong emphasis on continuous professional development and the professionalisation of educational administration. This approach aims to achieve high standards and high overall quality in the education sector.

CPD provides school leaders with the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to lead their schools effectively. In Lebanon, where the education system is undergoing significant reforms and modernisation, principals who are well-equipped through continuous training can more effectively implement these changes, support their teachers, and ultimately enhance student outcomes.

Moreover, the unique socio-political context of Lebanon, characterised by its diversity and ongoing challenges, requires school leaders who are not only administratively competent but also culturally responsive and adaptive to change. Continuous professional development ensures that principals are prepared to meet these challenges head-on, fostering resilience and innovation in their schools.

To address these challenges and align with global educational policies, the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD)¹ developed comprehensive reference frameworks for the competences of school principals and other school personnel, including academic accreditation and community partnerships. These frameworks aim to equip school leaders, and the whole school community, with the essential skills, knowledge, and competences for effective school leadership. Developing the Reference Framework for School Principals' Competences was crucial for shaping the professional development process, improving practices, and enhancing performance; enabling school principals to become more experienced, efficient, specialised, and capable of managing and confronting crises and challenges. After developing this framework, CERD developed, in participation with the British Council, eight training modules for school principals aimed at sustainable professional development, which address current challenges and anticipate future needs.

In summary, CPD for school principals in Lebanon is critical to ensuring the sustained improvement of the education system, the effective implementation of reforms, and the overall success of schools in nurturing future generations.

The Reference Framework for School Principals' Competences: structure and components

The framework is a living document serving as a vital tool, and a legal, administrative, and regulatory reference consistent with current educational policies. It is considered the cornerstone for establishing preparation, training, and professional development programmes, conducting candidate eligibility tests for school management, and supporting school and high-school principals throughout pre-university education, while simultaneously contributing to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The framework represents a transformative step in school administration by enhancing the competences of school principals. It provides knowledge, develops leadership and administrative skills, improves performance, and fosters professional relationships and community partnerships. Its goal is to create effective schools based on the concept of a learning community engaged with society and adaptable to developments.

The framework aligns with Lebanon's educational policies and modern educational trends, drawing on work by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and CERD. It serves as a practical tool for drafting job descriptions, setting candidate eligibility criteria, developing preparation programmes, designing CPD plans, and approving performance evaluation mechanisms.

The Reference Framework for School Principals' Competences is aligned with previous competency frameworks issued by the MEHE and CERD for four educational professions: teacher, teacher trainer, educational counselor, and psycho-social counselor. The competences set out in the framework are divided into four key domains:

- Specialised Professional Practices (SPP)
- Professional Relations (PR)
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Professional Ethics (PE)

Every domain includes a set of competences, each of which is divided into a number of components. These components are further broken down into professional behaviours and skills which, when combined, will form effective CPD for principals. Performance and progress towards mastery of the competences and their components is measured by using a set of indicators which ensure the individual parts of the CPD are done in a logical and relevant order.

In late 2019, workshops were organised involving representatives from across the educational landscape, with contributors coming from General Directorates of Education, CERD, the educational inspectorate, universities, teacher training centres, and schools. Participants provided valuable suggestions and recommendations related to the competences and the components, all of which were considered while developing the reference framework for the school principals' competences in pre-university education. In 2021 the scope of the reference framework was broadened to include concepts such as ethics, equality, friendliness, citizenship, integration, adaptation, distance learning, and crisis management.



The Reference for School Principals' CPD

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) section of School Principals' Reference was launched in 2022 as part of CERD's efforts to develop various frameworks and references. It consists of three important parts:

A qualitative research study titled School Principals and School Management, which includes a conceptual framework, qualitative research, and recommendations. This study emphasises concepts relevant to school principals in terms of responsibilities, duties, and practices. It aims to describe the profile of school principals based on relevant literature and research in line with the Lebanese context, local laws, strategies, and needs. The most frequently repeated concepts in the study are learning, co-operation, and participation.

A quantitative analysis of a representative sample of schools to identify training pathways for public school principals and classify the relevant training modules.

A formal structure for the training curriculum for school principals in Lebanon, identifying the relevant approaches, topics, and training needs, including school leadership and professional activities such as data management, curriculum management, planning, professional relations with learners and staff, community partnerships, and school improvement.

Related reference frameworks

The Reference Framework for Academic Accreditation: The Updated Standards for Effective Schools

Academic accreditation relies on systematic and accurate measurement tools to enable transparent assessment of the development of learners within the school community and educational system. It is a dynamic and continuous process for comprehensive school evaluation, aimed at identifying strengths and areas requiring development and re-evaluation without passing judgment on individuals.

The Reference Framework for Academic Accreditation: The Updated Standards for Effective Schools is based on the most up-to-date principles of educational development and the previous work of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The standards are based on internationally recognised quality standards, while also reflecting the Lebanese reality and context, and are composed of five domains that reflect the main pillars of the school:

1. School leadership
2. Teaching and learning
3. School environment
4. Community partnerships
5. Digital learning and ICT

Each domain is integrated with and influenced by the others. Professional development, communication, and assessment are not considered separate domains, but are incorporated into the other five.

Each domain is broken down into sub-domains consisting of specific standards that the school aims to achieve. These standards represent the concepts, rules, or conditions that are used as benchmarks to evaluate the quality of performance, practice, procedures, and behavior of individuals and groups.



The standards are crucial components related to quality and academic accreditation. They serve as the reference for evaluating the effectiveness of, and ensuring the quality of, education and teaching outcomes. They help school staff assess and reflect on their practices, and are instrumental in identifying needs and setting priorities to enhance performance and foster development.

Academic accreditation aims to improve and maintain the quality of education. It strives to support school development, enhance the teaching and learning process in all aspects, and focus on improving learners' achievements. Additionally, it aims to promote critical thinking and problem solving, support innovation and creativity, and develop learners' personalities at leadership, social, and cultural levels. Moreover, it aims to establish a culture of self-assessment, promote continued professional development for all members of the school community, enhance communication, activate community partnerships with the local community and civil society, and promote digital learning, information technology, and communications.

The Reference Framework for Community Partnerships

The Reference Framework for Community Partnerships contributes to supporting social and voluntary work, establishing the relevant administrative, legal, and procedural frameworks. These community partnerships aim to develop the learner as an active citizen, promoting a sense of local and national belonging and building social values and life skills. These are essential requirements in light of the economic, social, and political context of Lebanon, and the importance of the framework should not be underestimated:

- It aligns with the modern educational vision in terms of the role of effective schools.
- It enhances the school's interaction with the local, national, and international environment.
- It promotes school well-being and builds learners' life skills.
- It constitutes a starting point for describing the role of the school in terms of its relationship with the community.
- It lays the foundations for the learners' interaction with and awareness of the surrounding environment through voluntary, developmental, and guiding work.
- It provides a framework for the role of stakeholders in the development of the educational learning process (administrative and educational staff, parents, governmental and non-governmental organisations).

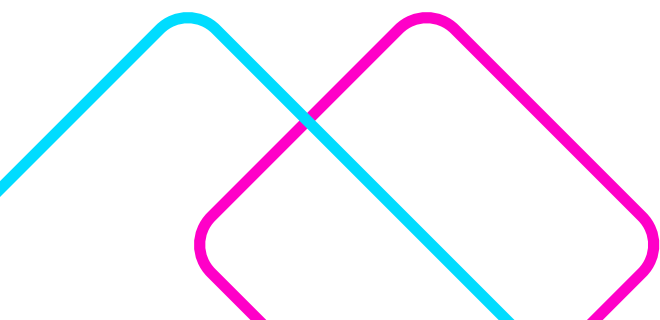
This reference framework includes six domains:

1. Volunteerism
2. Career guidance and the labour market
3. Prevention and protection
4. Awareness
5. Parents
6. Public relations and communication with the community

Each domain contains several standards, which refer to a concept, rule, or principle, which is used as an example or as a model to identify or measure the quality or performance of any practice or conduct.

Partnership with the British Council in developing training modules for school principals

In early 2020, during CERD work on developing the different reference frameworks, The head of the Educational Management Department was invited to London by the British Council to participate in a study visit examining school leadership. The timing was fortuitous as it coincided with the development of the reference frameworks and enabled further insights into governance and school leadership, autonomy, and accountability, continuous professional development of school leaders, transformational leadership, leading inclusive schools, monitoring and evaluation and other topics that were relevant to their development.



In November 2022, during MEHE and CERD work on developing the National Curriculum Framework, CERD representatives participated in the British Council's global school leadership conference in Cape Town. They presented what CERD have accomplished in terms of the reference frameworks, and learned about the experiences of other countries relating to governance, inclusion, equity, and school leadership. After the conference, the British Council took the initiative to translate the Reference Framework for School Principals' Competences, and in collaboration with CERD developed training materials for school leaders in Lebanon based on it.

In March 2023, the British Council, CERD, and the General Directorate of Education (GDE) organised a focus group with a sample of public school principals in Lebanon. The discussion focused on the challenges faced by school principals, their needs, their relationships with parents and the community, and how to build an effective and positive school climate. The goal is to develop training materials based on the discussion and the existing reference framework.

In April 2023, the Director General of Education (DGE), the President of CERD, and the Head of the Educational Management Department made a second study visit to London. This was successful as it enabled a deeper understanding of the approaches, strategies, systems, methods, capacities, and tools used in the United Kingdom in the development of leadership.

In May 2023, the British Council, CERD, and the GDE held a school leadership training workshop, where UK experts combined the school principals' competences with the needs of public school principals in Lebanon, and the relevant best practices in the United Kingdom.

In January 2024, CERD partnered with the British Council to launch eight training modules for school principals, aimed at enhancing their competences and thus improving school outcomes:

- Building and sustaining effective teams
- Creating, communicating, and implementing a vision
- Leading and managing change
- What is learning?
- Teachers' professional development
- Curriculum and planning
- Culture and behavior
- Building relationships with parents

In March 2024, the President of CERD, the Director of the Secondary Education Directorate in the GDE, and the head of the Educational Management Department at CERD attended a British Council conference in Lusaka, Zambia, entitled The School Leader's Role in the Heart of Their Communities. The delegation delivered a well-received presentation on the theme of 'How do education policies encourage school leaders to develop school-community relations that will support the development of high quality, inclusive schools?', and made significant contributions during panel discussions.

The collaboration between CERD and the British Council is ongoing. The British Council has recently translated two additional reference frameworks, which were developed by the Department of Educational Management in CERD; The Reference Framework for Academic Accreditation: The Updated Standards for Effective School and The Reference Framework for Community Partnerships. CERD is currently working on the editing and proofreading of these translated frameworks.

CPD for school principals, further steps

Investing in CPD ensures principals stay updated with the latest skills and knowledge, enabling them to drive school improvement and student success. This ongoing development is crucial for enhancing Lebanon's educational system.

In conclusion, CPD is essential for empowering school principals to lead with confidence, innovate in the face of challenges, and significantly contribute to the long-term success of education in Lebanon.

¹ The Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) is an independent public institution under the tutelage of the Minister of Education and Higher Education.

Shifting mindsets, unlocking potential and enabling change: the particular power of coaching for school leaders

Denise Barrows, UK Director, BTS Spark

At a time when the pressures on school leaders, and the complexity of the educational environments in which they operate are undoubtedly growing, policy makers and school administrators need to invest wisely in the professional development of those heading up their schools. Yet there are concerns that many leadership development programmes don't achieve the desired impact, or get to the heart of what's needed to meet today's challenges. In this article we examine how one-to-one coaching can enable a tangible and sustained transformation in leaders' day-to-day practice, providing versatile and highly impactful learning for school leaders and overcoming some of the common limitations of leadership programmes.

The leadership development challenge

The benefits of successfully building the capability of school leaders are clear. Multiple studies attest to the positive impact of effective school leadership on both student and school-level outcomes. In its 2021 report examining how principals affect students and schools, the US-based Wallace Foundation concluded, 'It is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership.'¹

As education systems look to the future – post-pandemic and with significant challenges ahead – there have been a growing number of calls for a more focused approach to leadership development. This is particularly true in higher performing jurisdictions that are identifying a need for more expansive models of leadership,² and in countries where the imperative for transformation is driven by major inequalities and a lack of universal access to even basic learning.³

Despite the undoubted importance of school leadership, there remains a lack of clarity around the leadership development processes that are most impactful, as well as concerns that prevalent training models and competency frameworks for school leaders may not be sufficient to equip them with the capabilities they now need.⁴ While there may be a number of reasons for this, in many cases programme designs have failed to take into account some of the common reasons why leadership development programmes can under-deliver and fall short of the desired impact.⁵ These include:

- **A one-size fits all approach**, which doesn't recognise that leadership is always contextual. Rather than focusing on the few key shifts in leadership practice to make the biggest difference for each individual leader within their own unique context, programmes can cover a whole set of expectations and capabilities, with the risk that leaders have little scope or motivation to engage deeply with any of them.
- **A failure to connect the theory to the reality of people's leadership experience**, so applying the learning does not feel relevant to the real challenges and tasks that leaders must prioritise in their day-to-day leadership.
- **Too much time delivering content, without engaging leaders in the hard work of personal growth and development.** Often a significant knowing – doing gap remains. Leaders know what's needed in theory, but may still struggle to break out of long-established ways of operating and shift their behaviours to achieve the greater impact they're seeking.
- **Not recognising the need (or knowing how) to shift mindsets to enable sustained shifts in behaviour.** All of us hold certain unhelpful beliefs, often about ourselves and/or others. Unless we let go of these, they can continue to hold us back in our leadership. This is particularly likely when we need to become more agile and collaborative to lead in more complex and uncertain environments.

Leadership coaching unpacked

In recent years, leadership coaching has emerged as a promising tool to support the development of school leaders, and importantly, by its very nature, it overcomes all four pitfalls noted above.

While coaching has become more commonplace to support school leaders – for example in the UK's government-funded Early Headship Coaching Offer – it is not always well-defined. And for some leaders, unless personally experienced, coaching retains an air of mystery. In reality, while there are important ethical principles, such as confidentiality, and core practices that should be common to all coaching relationships, coaching is a versatile process that can help school leaders in myriad ways.

For one head teacher, one-to-one coaching offers, '... a safe space to offload, clarify my thought processes and become reacquainted with my love of education.' For another, her coach, '... empowered me to go ahead and make some tough decisions and arrange meetings to hold those tricky conversations I was avoiding'. A third describes how, 'The depth of reflection, enabled by my coach, was immense. She opened up some deep-rooted areas of my leadership journey that to date I had not fully explored – it's been powerful.'

These experiences reflect some of the following benefits of high-quality leadership coaching:

1. It offers a powerful way for leaders to **build important leadership capabilities**, whether as a short, focused process to tackle a specific problem or development need, or a longer-term arrangement that supports leaders in navigating the challenges of leadership as they arise.
2. It creates a valuable, safe and supportive space for leaders to do the deep and sometimes uncomfortable work of **personal reflection and transformational growth**, uncovering the beliefs and assumptions that may need to shift to unlock hitherto unrealised potential.
3. For many leaders, their coaching conversations may be the only time they feel able to give proper attention to building and maintaining their own **well-being and personal resourcefulness**.
4. A trusted coach can become a **much-needed sounding board and critical friend** for school leaders, helping them explore different perspectives, analyse potential outcomes, and develop their critical thinking skills. This leads to better decision-making processes and greater confidence in leadership decisions.
5. Similarly, a coaching relationship can become a **forward-thinking space for more strategic or innovative thinking**, with leaders supported to explore creative solutions and new possibilities for the future of their schools.

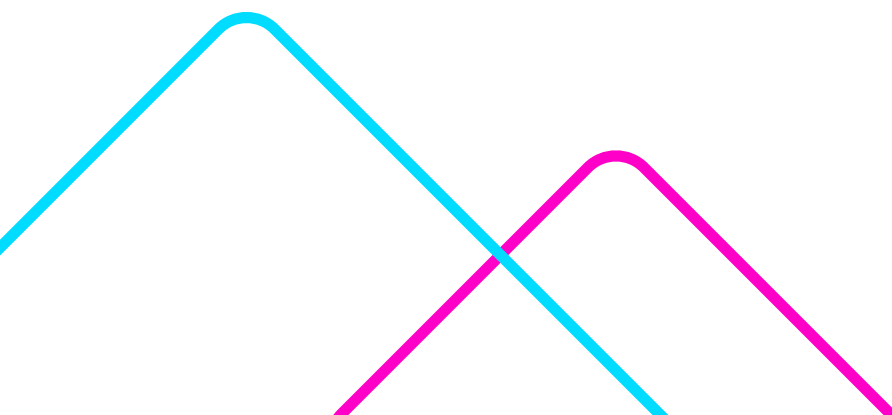
What makes coaching so powerful?

There are a number of coaching characteristics which engender a powerful learning experience, but also make it an especially valuable professional development process for school leaders:

1. **One-to-one leadership coaching is personalised**, with every coaching conversation focused on the individual leader and the particular goals they have set, the identified development needs, or the challenges they need to tackle. The leader's specific leadership context will be kept expressly in mind, thus ensuring the learning process feels meaningful and relevant.

A coaching programme may offer the option to include a psychometric test or leadership diagnostic; a self-assessment, or a 180 or 360 review inviting others to share their assessments of particular leadership attributes or behaviours. With the support of a coach to help interpret and contextualise the results, such an exercise can prove invaluable in providing useful insights into how others perceive an individual's leadership, and the particular strengths and development needs they observe.

The confidential nature of coaching is hugely valuable for school leaders, providing what they perceive as the only truly safe space to acknowledge the full reality of leadership – the pressures, the uncertainties and doubts all leaders feel at times – and to benefit from non-judgemental, expert support to identify and implement strategies for managing and overcoming these.



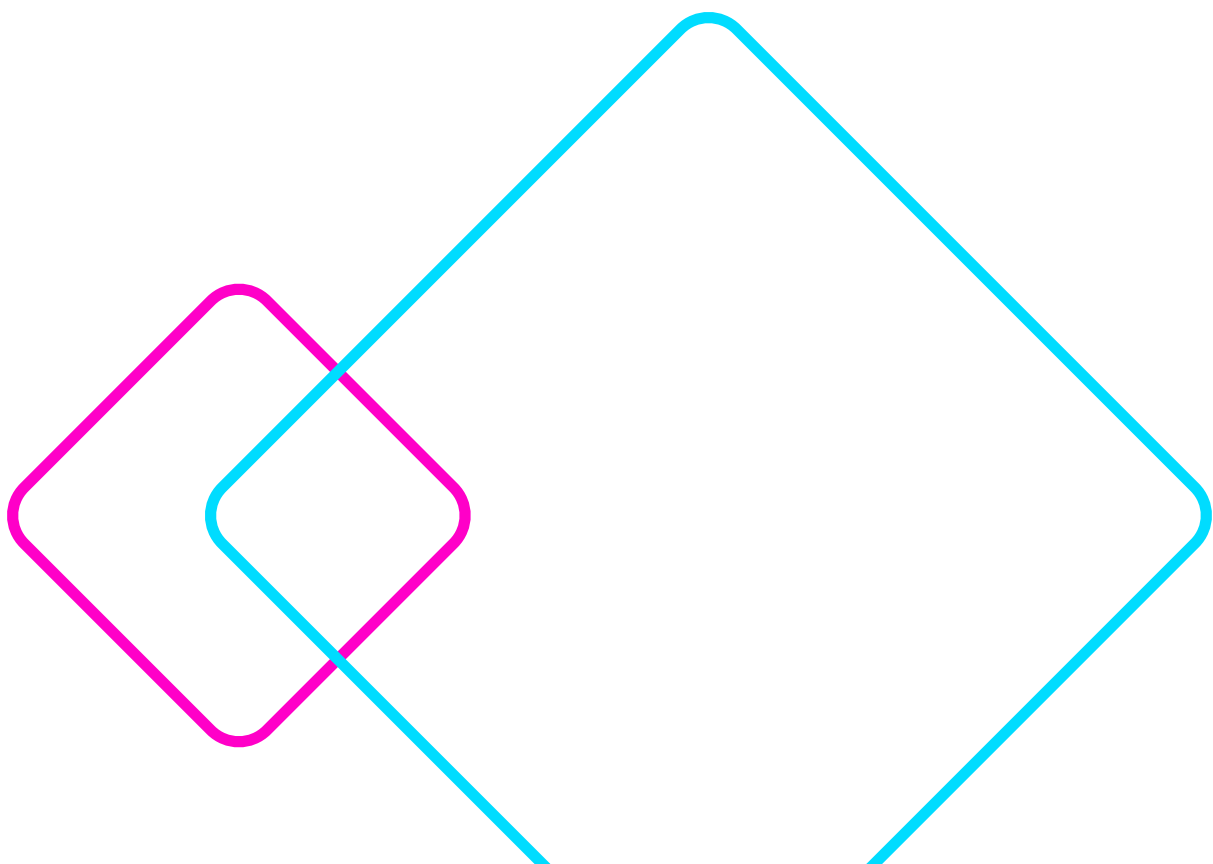
2. **Leadership coaching is highly purposeful.** It's not a soft option, it's a process designed to facilitate the hard work of personal and professional growth. In a coaching relationship, there are no spectators! A skilled coach will facilitate a process of change which gets to the heart of the matter – the mindsets and beliefs that underpin patterns of behaviour – and elicits a shift in these to sustain new approaches.

Experienced coaches are able to open up new levels of personal growth and learning for leaders, empowering vertical development in contrast to more typical horizontal development. To use a technology metaphor: horizontal development equates to adding more apps to our phone; vertical development is about upgrading the operating system to support more complex tasks. It enables leaders to view from a different perspective, find new and creative solutions, act with greater wisdom and capacity, and have transformative impact, both within and beyond their own school or organisation.

3. **Coaching is a highly practical professional development option** for busy, time-poor school leaders with tight professional development budgets. Leaders may be reluctant to take time away from school to attend scheduled training events or enrol in a programme that isn't entirely relevant to their current challenges and priorities. Conversely, coaching offers a 'just for me, just enough, just in time' solution that maximises the value of every minute. With most coaching sessions delivered remotely, sessions can be scheduled flexibly when a school leader needs them. Leaders discuss issues with their coach as they arise and agree a new way forward. Leaders can then immediately apply these new strategies, reviewing progress and refining plans almost in real time with their coach.

Whether you're a school leader recognising that your own professional development and support should be a priority, or an administrator, system leader or policy maker needing to shift leadership mindsets and build new capabilities at scale, leadership coaching should be part of your arsenal. Having coached thousands of school leaders around the world, at BTS Spark we are continually inspired and encouraged by testimonials like this one: 'I've had a lot of professional development in the past, but coaching has been like the missing piece in the puzzle for me. My coach helped me to work out how to support teachers and empower them. It has fundamentally changed the way I work and lead.'

- 1 Grissom, J., Egalite, A. and Lindsay, C. (2021) *How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- 2 See for example, OECD (2023). *High Performing Systems for Tomorrow 2023 Conceptual Framework*, and Hallgarten, J. and Robinson, L. (2023) *What else? What next? What if? A Report by Big Education and CfEY into the future of leadership development in England*. London: Big Education.
- 3 See for example, World Bank (2023). *Realizing the Future of Learning – From learning poverty to learning for everyone, everywhere* Washington DC: World Bank Group, and Alfadala, A. and Cosner, C. (2023). *Post-pandemic National Educational Investments: School Leadership Development through Innovative Learning Designs*. WISE/Qatar Foundation.
- 4 See for example, in the UK context, Hallgarten, J. and Robinson, L. (2023). *What else? What next? What if? A Report by Big Education and CfEY into the future of leadership development in England*. London: Big Education, and Cruddas, L. (2023). *The New Domains of Educational Leadership*. Nottingham: Confederation of School Trusts.
- 5 Gurdjian, P., Halbeisen, T. and Lane, K. (2014). *Why leadership-development programs fail*. McKinsey Quarterly, January 2014 edition.



School leader mindset: twinkle, twinkle teaching star, what you think is how (effective) you are

Dr Arran Hamilton

The global research suggests that educational leaders are more likely to unlock enhanced student learning gains when they adopt an *instructional* rather than a *transformational* leadership approach.¹

In other words, leaders who work collaboratively with educators to explore what is and isn't working, and who focus on continuous incremental improvement, are more likely to generate impact. However, implementing instructional leadership approaches effectively can be exceedingly difficult.

In this chapter, I suggest that one of the keystones of effective instructional leadership is in holding the mirror up to educators, so that teachers can systematically explore their individual and collective beliefs about teaching and learning. There is increasing evidence that how teachers *think* has a more profound impact on student achievement than the curriculum they teach, the technology they use or the per-pupil funding they receive.

A significant body of research is forming around two main constructs:

- **Teacher efficacy** – ‘the extent to which teachers believe that they have the capacity to affect student performance.’²
- **Collective teacher efficacy** – ‘the perceptions of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on the students.’³

The theory of change behind these two constructs is that when teachers *think* they can make a profound difference to student outcomes, they do. Although, this is not about the belief alone; it's about the way the belief drives educators to collaborate with the goal of improvement. And the fact that their positivity and optimism makes the outcome of that collaboration far more likely to be successful.

Rachel Eells's ground-breaking meta-analysis, which synthesised 26 major studies on the impact of collective teacher efficacy on student learning outcomes, generated sizable evidence of impact.⁴ And John Hattie's most recent meta-meta-analysis identified collective teacher efficacy as the influence with the single highest effect size.⁵

But it's not just educators' collective positivity that's important; it's also:

- what they *think* about their profession
- what they *think* about how teaching skills are acquired and enhanced
- what they *think* about how students learn
- what they *believe* to be the best ways to identify, implement and evaluate possible improvements to their practice.

And there's an important role that instructional leaders can play in facilitating this *thinking* process.

What can we learn about teaching thinking from other professions?

Like most other professions, in most parts of the world, teachers require a licence to practice. But, unlike other professions, there is no globally dominant way of *thinking* about what teaching is. In some ways, perhaps, that's a good thing – it prevents a situation where everyone thinks the same way and no-one questions the status quo.

However, I want to argue that educators (with the support of their instructional leaders) might benefit from reflecting on the kind of profession teaching *should* be. This type of meta-thinking might also help educators harness their positive collective thinking towards the *right* kind of pursuits and reduce the number of blind alleys they find themselves in, which might potentially dissipate their collective efficacy.

This chapter will set out four potential modes of thinking that are drawn from four relatively different 'noble pursuits', each with different implications for how teachers could think about their role and how best to execute it.

Table 1: The noble pursuits and their implications for teachers

Noble pursuits	Implications for how teachers <i>think</i> about their role/what they <i>do</i>
Noble pursuit 1: parenting	<p>Like parenting, teaching would require no formal training or licence; instead, educators would learn on the job through trial and error by osmosis, and without much explicit thinking.</p> <p>It's worth noting that I do not endorse this way of thinking, but include it for pure provocation.⁶</p>
Noble pursuit 2: acting	<p>Like actors, teachers would need to learn their lines, and, over time, some would progress to becoming 'script writers'. They would think about how to best deliver the script and about whether their delivery was effective.</p> <p>The role of the leader is akin to a film director – getting their actors to deliver the lines in the most passionate and inspiring way.</p>
Noble pursuit 3: medicine	<p>Like surgeons, teachers would need to master a 'basket' of protocols/strategies and then draw on their experience to intuitively adjust and blend these to the specifics of their classroom context. But, once they have mastered these, they might not think very deeply about the various techniques; instead, they would enjoy the flow of automatic and effortless execution and switching.</p> <p>The role of the leader might involve supporting the establishment of professional learning communities, to encourage teachers to peer support one another.</p>
Noble pursuit 4: science	<p>Like scientists, teachers would need to be trained systematically to evaluate their own impact – setting hypotheses and collecting verifiable empirical data.</p> <p>They would think about the quality of the evidence they have collected and about the different ways of interpreting and implementing their findings – to generate far greater impact in the classroom.</p> <p>The role of the leader would be akin to a lab director, helping their 'scientists' to systematically review the data and to decide where to go next.</p>

These noble pursuits have been deliberately selected to stoke controversy, as a way of encouraging instructional leaders and educators to explicitly unpack their understanding of what they currently do, and to *think* carefully about whether there are different and better mental frames for undertaking the role of a teacher that can lead to stronger and more consistent learner outcomes.

By reading on, it will become patently clear that each of these ways of thinking about teaching has different implications in terms of how educators:

- are trained
- collaborate with one another
- measure their impact.

And in terms of how leaders support educators to unleash greatness.

We start at the most controversial end of the spectrum: teaching as parenting.

Noble pursuit 1: Teachers as a surrogate parent

Parenting is extremely hard, but, despite being profoundly important, it requires no formal training or licence. Fortunately, humanity has survived and thrived for an estimated 150,000 years without the need for such training. You wouldn't be here today if any of your more than 7,500 ancestors catastrophically 'dropped the baby'.⁷ So, there's an argument that parenting is something that virtually anyone can do to a reasonable standard, naturally.

This raises the question of whether anyone could be a teacher *naturally* and with limited or no training.

Research studies that compare teachers who enter the profession with previous training to those who are simply thrust in the classroom and left to muddle through have consistently found very little difference in student achievement.⁸ On the face of it, this suggests that education systems could operate without providing teachers with any vocational training or professional development. Assuming, of course, that these untrained recruits are, at least, literate and numerate.

If we follow the lessons from the *parenting* paradigm to their logical conclusion, we wouldn't bother investing in any sort of teacher training. Nor would we worry too much about what or how they think. Leaders would also not bother leaving their offices, entering classrooms or collaborating with teachers to improve their instructional effectiveness. Instead, like parenting, we would just leave teachers to figure it out for themselves and reinvest the US\$35 billion⁹ a year normally spent on professional development in other worthy causes.

However, if we want to ensure that students get a uniformly good experience from every single teacher they meet, we need a more interventionist model and a more interventionist way of *thinking* about the profession. There are, after all, pedagogical approaches that are highly effective, including the use of:

- **blended phonics** – to teach children to read¹⁰
- **formative assessment** – to provide feedback and feedforward¹¹
- **teacher clarity** – to set learning intentions and success criteria¹²
- **cognitive task analysis** – understanding the parts of the lesson that will require a high cognitive load from students (such as problem solving, memory retrieval and judgement) and sprinkling these in a manner that does not result in cognitive overload.¹³

These are just a few examples from a burgeoning literature on what works best. Given that we know there are *many* approaches for getting an above average return on investment, why would we want to leave it to chance that teachers will independently discover these gems through osmosis?

It clearly makes sense to train teachers and to equip them with the meta-cognitive skills to *think* deeply about the nature of their profession – if we can find the right modality. So, on to our next noble pursuit.

Noble pursuit 2: Teaching as acting

The acting profession has existed for at least 2,500 years. In ancient Greece and Rome, bands of actors made their living by portraying the exploits of great historical figures and fictional characters. However, while many modern actors complete formal qualifications in stagecraft, no one requires an acting licence.

The most common approach to the acting craft is to work with a script that has been developed by an expert writer. An actor's freedom to make the role their own comes in their tone of voice, their facial expression, the way they look at the audience and where they stand on the stage. The words on the page don't tend to change, although there can be tremendous differences in how individual actors execute or deliver their lines, and the amount of acclaim they receive.

If we thought of teaching as acting, teachers would follow scripted routines. Those routines will have been written by expert 'script writers' (educational action researchers), who will have tested the scripts in lots of education settings before agreeing and prescribing the best version for use in the classroom.

It's likely that many teachers would balk at the idea of being reduced to delivering a script, on the basis that it de-professionalises their role. There is growing evidence, however, that highly scripted approaches to teaching can be extremely effective. In the 1960s, Siegfried Engelman pioneered the Direct Instruction approach.¹⁴ Direct Instruction is centred around the development of a systematic curriculum delivered through a prescribed script. More recent approaches pioneered by Robert Slavin have also shown similar levels of effectiveness, although they are not without controversy.¹⁵

The scripted Direct Instruction approach to teacher training and teacher *thinking* is, theoretically, quite straightforward. It involves familiarising teachers with the materials, getting them to rehearse using them and, optionally, some lesson study or independent coaching to help them understand why the materials have been written and sequenced in such a specific way. Like the actor, the pivotal role of the teacher is simply to *animate* the lesson by bringing their own style and personality to how they deliver the script. And the role of the instructional leader would be akin to that of a film director or acting coach, supporting teachers to deliver their lines with more passion and vigour.

But scripted Direct Instruction-style approaches seem to work best in contexts where there are no professionalised teachers, as trained teachers often fear the loss of their professional autonomy, and this can be a difficult barrier to traverse. Also, following a script does not encourage educators to *think* deeply about their role and the best ways to execute it. So, let's move on to the next noble pursuit.

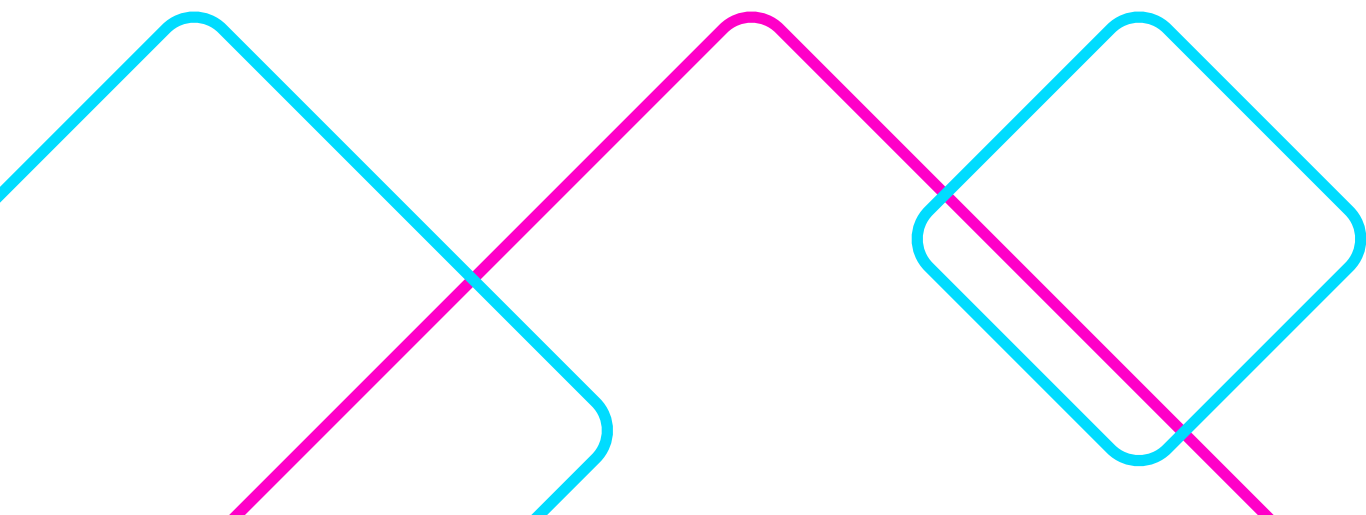
Noble pursuit 3: Teachers as surgeons

The training and licensing requirements for entry to the medical profession are considerably more standardised and arguably more gruelling than for acting. Pre-service training for medical practitioners lasts an average of five years, and surgeons usually don't reach the hallowed status of consultant until they are at least a decade into their career – after undertaking many electives and supervised work placements.

On the surface, surgeons seem to follow similarly rigid diagnosis and intervention protocols to the scripts delivered by actors, with limited room for improvising along the way. The truth, however, is slightly more nuanced. It would be more accurate to say that surgeons have 'baskets' of overlapping protocols and sub-protocols they can draw upon.¹⁶ There are different incision types, wound-closing techniques, dissection protocols and even equipment, ranging from traditional scalpels to robotic arms. Often, surgeons choose the protocols from the basket they are most comfortable with. As a result, they have more leeway than scripted actors in deciding what to do and when.

If teachers are like surgeons, they should be trained in a whole basket of protocols, such as lesson warm-ups, co-operative learning strategies, project-based learning approaches, and questioning techniques, and they would draw from what they think will be the most appropriate baskets of activities for that specific lesson. As with surgeons, that choice would often be an intuitive judgement call about which of the prescribed approaches has worked for them in the past and, therefore, what they feel comfortable with. It's about refinement through trial, error and experience.

If we see this as the accepted professional model of teaching, then the core purpose of professional development and instructional leadership is to provide teachers with an expanded collection of tricks, tips and activities that they can add to their existing toolbox or basket of experiences. It's then up to the discretion of autonomous teachers to intuitively decide which tools to pick out and use, and, also, to recalibrate, as they scan the classroom for feedback. An aligned purpose would be to support teachers to *think* meta-cognitively about why they pick some strategies over others, and whether the approaches they default to provide the best return for student learning.



Noble pursuit 4: Teachers as scientists

Scientists undertake research; they search and search again. Scientists use a standardised methodology to create hypotheses, design and conduct experiments, evaluate data and build theories. In science, to disprove something is considered evidence of progress. It means we can narrow down the search to a smaller number of potential scenarios. Scientists are also highly collaborative, working together in research groups and sharing ideas, equipment and eureka moments.

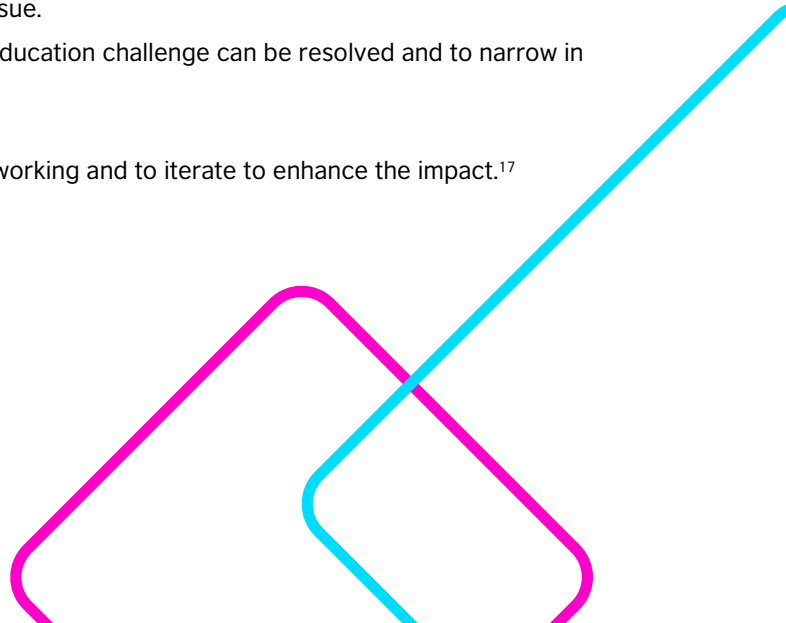
For teachers to be considered professionally equivalent to research scientists, we might expect to see them doing many of the following things during their working year.

1. **Searching:** like all good scientists, educators would devote time to reading the latest peer-reviewed research on educationally effective practice, to build on the shoulders of the giants that went before them and to attempt to put their insights into practice.
2. **Identifying challenging problems:** within their own institutional context, they would use a range of tools, like lesson observation, student voice recordings, psychometrics, surveys, student achievement data and student attendance data, to take the pulse of their school and identify major barriers to student learning. They would seek to further validate the reality and severity of these problems with different stakeholder groups.
3. **Building theories of change:** drawing on all the research they have previously imbibed, they would begin to build speculative causal models of why their specific problems exist and how to resolve them. This might involve working backwards through the causal chain to identify elements that could be varied and which, by varying, might spark improvement.
4. **Developing interventions:** these might be micro-variations on an existing approach (like, for example, introducing comments-only marking in their class), or they might be complex, whole-school or, even, system-wide reform initiatives. Sometimes these interventions might be developed from scratch, but more commonly, they might simply be borrowed from other contexts – to assess whether they are as effective in different kinds of settings.
5. **Testing:** this would involve the design of evaluation protocols to measure whether the proposed change is a step forward or three steps backwards, and then putting the intervention into practice, while systematically and dispassionately collecting data.
6. **Evaluating:** reviewing the data to see whether the intervention was successful and whether it could be improved yet further by iterating or ‘wiggling’ any of its sub-components through an evolutionary design process.
7. **Publishing:** making the findings available, so that other educators can review them and attempt to replicate the results in their specific contexts.

The role of the leader would be akin to that of a lab director – supporting the scientists in their group to continuously develop and rigorously test hypotheses about what works best for improving student learning.

Many education systems (and educators) shy away from encouraging their teachers to *think* like research scientists, because it can be a tall order to master both teaching and research-based approaches to improvement. However, in my recent work with Laureate Professor John Hattie, we developed a model, which we call G.O.L.D, and which is explicitly designed to support educators and instructional leaders through a cut-down or ‘lite’ version of the scientific thinking process. This involves:

- **Goal hunting** – to find education challenges worth solving and to then understand the causal mechanism, or moving parts, that generate the issue.
- **Opportunity sifting** – to explore all the ways the education challenge can be resolved and to narrow in on the better bets.
- **Lift-off** – to put those better bets into action.
- **Double back** – to check the approach is actually working and to iterate to enhance the impact.¹⁷



Bringing it all together

In this (deliberately controversial) chapter, I have outlined four different modes of thinking for educators and instructional leaders to explore together (see Table 2).

Table 2: Four modes of thinking for educators and leaders

Modality	Teachers as surrogate parents	Teachers as actors	Teachers as surgeons	Teachers as scientists
Way of acting	Unstructured learning on the job – by osmosis.	Teachers follow a script developed by experts (or possibly themselves).	Teachers learn many classroom protocols and mix these intuitively – based on their reading of the classroom context.	Teachers use the scientific method to develop hypotheses and conduct experiments to measure and enhance their impact.
Way of training	No training provided, and limited personal reflection required.	Training in how to effectively execute branching scripts ¹⁸ and, eventually, to graduate to become a script writer.	Training in new activities and routines that teachers can add to their mix – leaving the selection largely down to the teacher's professional judgement.	Training in scientific inquiry, to enable educators to conduct inquiry cycles to enhance their impact.
Way of thinking	Narrow and implicit.	Narrow and explicit for 'actors', but wide, deep and evidence-based for 'script writers'.	Wide, but often intuitive/gut-feeling-based; pattern recognition.	Wide, deep and evidence-based.
Type of leadership support	Leaders as administrators.	Leaders as instructional acting coaches.	Leaders as facilitators of professional peer support and improvement networks.	Leaders as lab directors, supporting the design, implementation and evaluation of experiments.
Also known as	Unstructured	Prescriptive	Professional expertise	Systematic inquiry

I'm not prescribing any of these as a silver bullet. The real magic comes from educators' and leaders' collective discussions and your interrogation of the benefits of these different ways of thinking and acting.

So, what do you *think* teachers and leaders should be, and how will you bring this to life through your approaches to instructional leadership? Because, *twinkle, twinkle teaching star*: what you think is how (effective) you are!

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- 3 Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K. and Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2000). Collective efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37, 479–507.
- 4 Eells, R. J. (2011). Meta-Analysis of the Relationship Between Collective Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement. *Dissertations* 133. Available at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/133
- 5 Donohoo, J., Hattie, J. and Eells, R. J. (2018). The Power of Collective Efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40–44.
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- 8 See, for example, Hacke, W. (2010). Meta-analysis comparing student outcomes for National Board certified teachers and non-National Board certified teachers. *Doctoral Dissertations* 384. Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/384> See also Sparks, K. (2004). The effect of teacher certification on student achievement. *Doctoral Dissertations*.
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- 12 Fendick, F. (1990). *The correlation between teacher clarity of communication and student achievement gain: a meta-analysis*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Florida.
- 13 Tofel-Grehl, C. and Feldon, D. F. (2013). Cognitive task analysis-based training: A meta-analysis of studies. *Journal of Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making*, 7, 293–304.
- 14 See Stockard, J. and Wood, T. W. (2018). The Effectiveness of Direct Instruction Curricula: A Meta-Analysis of a Half Century of Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 479–507. DOI:10.3102/0034654317751919. See also Coughlin, C. (2014). 'Outcomes of Engelmann's Direct Instruction: Research syntheses', in J. Stockard (ed.) *The science and success of Engelmann's Direct Instruction* (pp. 25–54). Eugene, OR: NIFDI Press.
- 15 Slavin, R. E., Madden, N. A., Dolan, L. J., Wasik, B. A., Ross, S., Smith, L. and Dianda, M. (1996). Success for All: A summary of research. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 1(1), 41–76. DOI:10.1207/s15327671espr0101_6
- 16 See Burgers, J. S., Grol, R., Klazinga, N. S., Mäkelä, M. and Zaat, J. (2011). Towards evidence-based clinical practice: an international survey of 18 clinical guideline programs. *International Journal Quality Health Care*, 15(1), 31–45. DOI:10.1093/intqhc/15.1.31. See also Shekelle, P. G., Ortiz, E., Rhodes, S. et al. (2001). Validity of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality clinical practice guidelines: how quickly do guidelines become outdated? *JAMA*, 286(12), 1,461–1,467. DOI:10.1001/jama.286.12.1461.
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Why is school-to-school collaboration important and how can we make it work?

Toby Greany

Imagine a school leader who works in the education system you are most familiar with. Picture them in their office, at school.

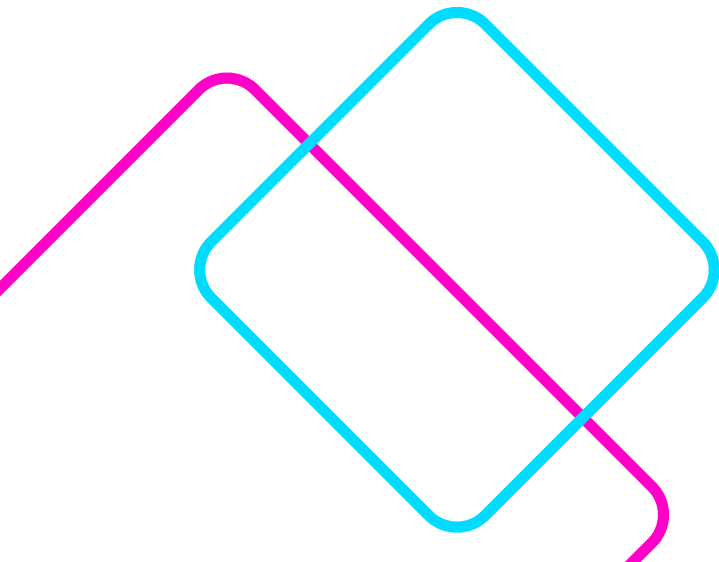
Now imagine that they are facing an issue they've never encountered before, or a challenge they've been trying to address for some time, without success. Who do they turn to for ideas and support? The chair of the school's governing body or their supervisor at the district office may be ideal for supporting on some issues, but less so on others. For example, a headteacher might not want to reveal they are struggling to the person responsible for their performance management assessments. Or the challenge might just be something these people can't really help with, because they are not currently working in a school.

In many parts of the world, our imaginary school leader will turn to their networks for support on the tricky issues they face – their trusted colleagues in other schools who have faced similar issues, who can empathise and offer practical suggestions about what to do. These networks are often informal, based on professional friendships that develop almost naturally as we progress through our careers. In England, for example, it is common for headteachers to stay in touch with the other heads they met when studying for their National Professional Qualification for Headship.

Two points are important here. First, if your imaginary school leader does not have such informal networks to turn to, if their school operates in 'splendid isolation', then there will be limited opportunities for them and their staff to learn from practices in other schools, or to get emotional or practical support from their peers when they face a tricky issue. Second, if the networks your imaginary leader engages with are all informal and self-generated, with no coherent ways of working or supporting infrastructure, then there is a risk they will be limited in their scope and impact, and that they don't align with wider system priorities and forms of communication.

Networks, collaborations and partnerships between schools can take multiple forms and achieve multiple objectives. This can make them hard to make sense of – and even harder to lead and manage. Nevertheless, the main message in this chapter is that policymakers should think carefully about where and how they want to encourage school-to-school networking as part of wider reform efforts, and what they need to put in place to make this happen successfully.

This is because school-to-school collaboration offers huge potential for sharing learning and expertise across systems, for providing support to schools that are struggling, for ensuring 'joined up' provision that meets the needs of all children, and/or for supporting innovation.^{1,2,3,4,5} That said, it is important to note that the evidence on how networks and collaboration lead to impact is not consistently strong – partly because it is challenging to assess impact from more diffuse partnerships, for example, where schools are working with other services or universities to 'join up' provision. The strongest evidence comes from formally brokered school-to-school support and federations, for example, where successful schools support lower-performing schools to improve.^{6,7}



It is also important to recognise that networks are not simple to manage and do not offer a panacea. For example, Greany and Higham⁸ highlight that:

Networks can develop equitable partnerships, but can also support asymmetric power relations in which particular members gain authority and secure unequal gains and this can erode trust.⁹ Networks can be open and inclusive, but can also be closed and exclusive where members develop a preference to interact with insiders or seek to manage and restrict flows of knowledge.¹⁰ Networks can be flat and horizontal, but can also contain their own internal hierarchies.¹¹ Further, while networks can be co-ordinated on the basis of trust, external risk, suspicion and fear can also motivate people or organizations to collaborate without trust.¹²

Despite these challenges, the majority of schools in England today engage in networks, and the development of school-to-school collaboration has been a significant feature of education policy since the early 2000s. This chapter outlines these developments and draws out some of the main learning from research and experience to identify implications for policy and practice.

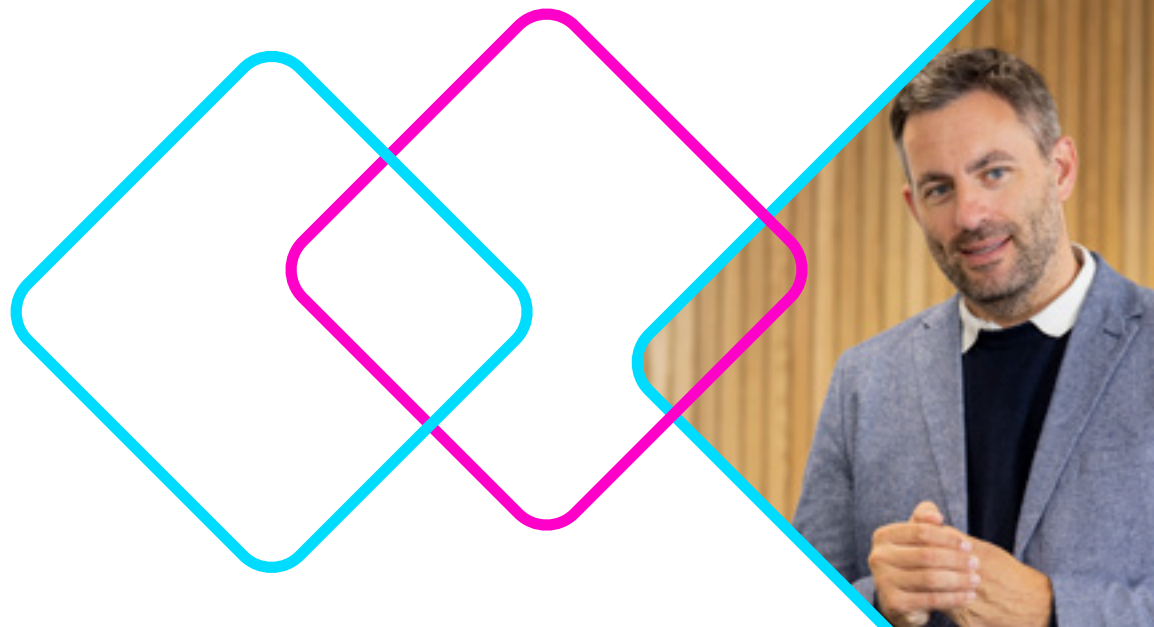
How has policy in England worked to encourage school partnerships?

Most schools in England today are engaged in a range of partnerships, usually with other schools, but sometimes with other partners, such as universities. These partnerships range in their breadth and depth, but a combination of factors – mostly policy-driven – has served to increase the importance and strength of networks, starting around 2000, but particularly since 2010. Today, the partnership landscape in England is complex and disjointed, even within a single locality, resulting from historic patterns of competition and collaboration, as well as more recent developments and forms of leadership agency.

England's school system is frequently described in terms of 'high-autonomy high-accountability.'¹³ This reflects the fact that, since the late 1980s, school leaders in England have had relatively high levels of autonomy to make operational decisions, for example, in relation to staffing and budgets, while being held tightly accountable for school performance, as measured via standardised tests for pupils and school Ofsted inspections. Schools also compete with each other, in particular to attract pupils, with funding following parental choice of school.

In this context, research in the 1990s identified sharp competition and significant status hierarchies between schools, particularly at the secondary level.^{14,15} Critically, although both Labour- and Conservative-led governments since that time have encouraged schools to collaborate, they have not dismantled the core 'high-autonomy high-accountability' framework, meaning that school leaders must maintain a focus on meeting their own institution's priorities, even as they also work in partnership. Thus, competitive pressures have not stopped, leading to arguments that schools are engaged in 'co-opetition'.^{16,17,18,19,20}

Around 2000, the then New Labour government began to introduce various funding and policy incentives that encouraged schools to collaborate, both with other schools and, sometimes, with wider partners. Evaluations of these initiatives reveal a range of important opportunities and challenges for partnership working, many of which are outlined below. Perhaps the most successful New Labour initiative involving networks was the London Challenge, which had multiple strands but included a focus on brokering successful schools to support under-performing schools.^{21,22} In subsequent years, this approach developed into the National Leaders of Education programme and the wider use of school-to-school support as a means of securing improvement in under-performing schools.²³



Labour also established a legal framework for inter-school partnerships, as legislation passed in 2002 enabled maintained schools to federate together, with a single governing body (and, often, an executive headteacher) overseeing two or more schools. This federation model provided the template for the later development of multi-academy trusts (MATs), initially under Labour and then, after 2010, as a system-wide approach.

Several important lessons can be drawn from New Labour's approach to fostering partnerships. First, it is clear that some partnerships formed as a response to the specific funding pots available, but then all but dissolved once the funding stopped. Indeed, a popular definition of partnership at the time was 'the suppression of mutual loathing in the pursuit of public funding'.²⁴ Second, the multiplicity of programmes and funding streams under New Labour led to accusations of 'initiativitis' and a 'congested state', with evidence that some schools felt overwhelmed by the sheer range of partnership opportunities on offer.²⁵ Nevertheless, it could be argued that New Labour's investment in partnerships and networks served to shift the culture, making collaboration a core feature of the school system in England. For example, a survey conducted in early 2010 indicated that around three-quarters of headteachers were engaged in some form of school-to-school partnership at that time.²⁶

The Conservative-led governments in power since 2010 have built on this platform, seeking to develop what they call a 'self-improving, school-led' system,²⁷ and have argued that 'partnership and collaborative working between schools is an essential requirement for realising this vision'.²⁸ Indeed, a series of influential think pieces written by David Hargreaves for the then National College for School Leadership argued that all schools must collaborate in 'deep' partnerships for a 'self-improving system' to succeed.^{29,30,31,32}

Two initiatives have been central to the government's approach in this area. The first is 'system leadership' and school-to-school support, where high-performing schools and school leaders can volunteer to be designated by the government (as either a Teaching School or National Leader of Education), with a remit to develop networks (called 'alliances') and support improvement in other schools. The second, more significant initiative has been the development of multi-academy trusts (MATs). A MAT is a charitable, non-profit company with a board and CEO that operates multiple academies via a funding agreement with the secretary of state for education.³³ The growth of MATs has been rapid, with around 1,200 MATs now operating 7,600 academies (accounting for more than a third of all schools and around half of all pupils in England), with each MAT responsible for between two and more than 40 academies, sometimes operating over a wide geographic area.

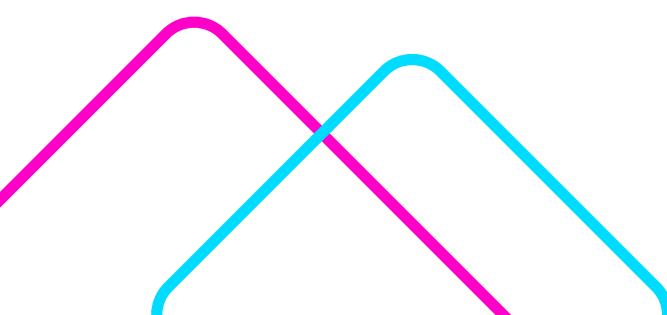
In addition to developing 'system leadership' and MATs, the government has been dismantling the educational oversight role of England's 152 local authorities since 2010. Local authorities had provided a crucial vehicle for reform implementation and school improvement support under previous administrations, but have now been largely replaced by MATs. In so doing, the government argues that it has reduced hierarchical oversight and freed up schools to individually and collectively 'self-improve'. In practice, however, as the following section sets out, the picture is considerably more complex.

School partnerships in England

Greany and Higham analysed the various ways in which schools in England collaborate within the context of wider policy-driven reforms that have been under way since 2010.³⁴ Their study includes detailed case studies of local clusters (primary and secondary) of varying strength, depth and breadth.

They found that informal networks – most often centred on local clusters – remain important to schools, but that many of these informal networks have worked to become more formal and structured, usually by adopting one of the government's preferred models (by becoming a Teaching School Alliance and/or MAT). The increased importance of networking for schools is driven by a view, reported by one primary headteacher in the study, that collaboration is 'more and more something we need to do'. This perspective reflects a mix of factors, but particularly the loss of support from local authorities, coupled with the need to respond to significant national policy changes and new accountability requirements.

The research indicates that primary schools collaborate with an average of nine or ten other schools, while for secondary schools, the number is usually between ten and 13. Collaboration is most common with schools in the same phase and is often long-standing (five years or more). Most schools have a smaller number of long-term, more intensive ties and a larger number of newer, less intensive connections. In a national survey of headteachers, conducted as part of the same study, just two per cent of respondents



stated that their school did not collaborate with any other school in a meaningful way.

In terms of the nature and focus of collaborative activity between schools, Greany and Higham show how this ranges from a local cluster that does little more than organise an annual inter-school sports day, to partnerships involving staff at multiple levels that impact on virtually every aspect of life and learning within member schools.

Primary school clusters had usually originated in previous local-authority-led initiatives, but those that had survived and developed had often been overlain with other initiatives and aims over time. Membership in these local clusters was usually voluntary and often fluid, but was generally drawn from a distinct local area with neighbouring or partly neighbouring schools.

These clusters rarely had formal governance structures, with shared decision making usually sited informally within a headteachers' group. Common activities within stronger local primary clusters included headteacher meetings, curriculum or subject leader networks, assessment and moderation groups, peer reviews, research projects and joint practice development or shared professional development for staff, and providing joint extracurricular provision.

By contrast, secondary schools tended to collaborate in different ways, often over wider geographic areas, reflecting the fact that they are more likely than primaries to be in competition with neighbouring secondary schools.

Where local clusters and partnerships chose to formalise their partnership, for example, by becoming a Teaching School Alliance or MAT, this was generally driven by a desire to access funding and increase sustainability.

However, adopting these models inevitably meant that the partnership changed as a result. This is most evident in the case of MATs; once a school has joined a trust it ceases to exist as a separate legal entity, and the headteacher is line managed by the CEO of the MAT or by another member of the central team. While most MATs do seek to encourage some level of collaboration between schools in the group,³⁵ a MAT is, thus, not a 'partnership' in the usual sense of a voluntary collaboration between 'legally autonomous organizations that work together'.³⁶

Greany and Higham conclude that the 'self-improving school-led system' is a development of, rather than an alternative to, England's pre-existing 'high-autonomy high-accountability' – or New Public Management³⁷ – policy framework. Thus, while it is true that school partnerships and networks have become more important since 2010, these collaborative arrangements do not represent a 'self-governing' alternative to hierarchy and markets. A consistent view is that the government's agenda has created a more fragmented system in which there are 'winners and losers', with a sub-set of higher status schools, often 'system leader' schools,



seen to be gaining new opportunities and resources, while lower-status schools face overlapping challenges, including higher levels of deprivation and pupil mobility. In this context, the extent to which a strong and inclusive partnership develops in any given locality depends on a complex array of factors, including the history of local relationships between schools, the context of individual schools, and the agency and values of local actors.³⁸

Lessons for successful school-to-school collaboration

This final section draws out a set of overarching findings on the factors that support successful school-to-school partnerships, with a focus on governance and leadership. These findings come, in part, from the research and evaluations referenced above, while also drawing on wider research into partnerships, including those beyond the education sector.

First, we can say that strong networks and partnerships generally reflect a shared goal or interest. Provan and Kenis³⁹ note that organisations join or form networks for a variety of reasons, including to gain legitimacy, serve clients more effectively, attract more resources, or address complex problems, but that all network organisations seek to achieve some end they could not achieve independently. In education, partnerships generally focus on improving the quality of education for children, although day-to-day partnership activity might be on ‘upstream’ issues, such as training new teachers. As we have seen, competitive pressures in a system can make working in partnership more challenging, while providing funding to incentivise partnerships may not lead to sustainable models in the absence of shared goals and values. So, there is a need to focus on how partnerships come together initially to identify a shared vision and set of priorities.

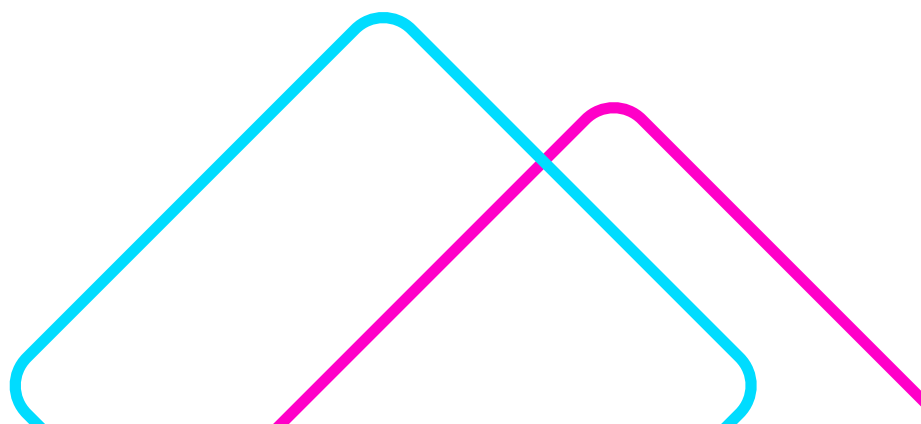
Second, successful networks generally share attributes, such as solidarity, altruism, loyalty, reciprocity and trust, and these take time to build. The circumstances around how a network is formed – for example, whether or not schools are mandated to join a particular group – will influence the development of these attributes.

Hargreaves argues that ‘deep’ partnerships require strong ties between staff at multiple levels across schools,⁴⁰ with close and frequent interactions and high levels of relational trust and reciprocity.⁴¹ However, Wellman argues that, in modern society, weaker ties of less intimate but more numerous interactions are more typical.⁴² Subsequent research has shown how weak ties can allow information to flow and problems to be solved in distributed networks that do not rely on high levels of trust.⁴³ These findings are perhaps reflected in the nature of school partnerships in England, as outlined above, where most schools have a smaller number of long-term and more intensive ties and a larger number of newer and less intensive ties. The – admittedly somewhat gnomic – implication for policy might be that the approach to fostering partnerships should be neither too tight nor too loose.

Third, many networks develop formalised governance and management structures as they grow over time, believing this will improve efficiency, but this can risk reducing levels of ownership for (some) members. Provan and Kenis⁴⁴ identify three typical models of governance:

1. ‘shared governance networks’ are governed equally by all network members
2. ‘lead organisation networks’ are governed by one network member, acting as a centralised network broker
3. ‘network administrative organisations’ (NAOs) are networks governed externally by a separate administrative entity, often with a formal manager or CEO.

Provan and Kenis⁴⁵ also argue that, while many networks begin with informal ‘shared governance’, as they grow, they commonly evolve towards a ‘lead organisation’ or ‘NAO’ structure. This, they argue, is because finding consensus, sustaining trust and organising activities becomes more complex and burdensome in larger networks. However, Milward and Provan acknowledge that lead organisation networks can become dominated by the lead organisation, while NAOs can create a complex governing administration, with increased costs and decreased transparency.⁴⁶ In both cases, this can precipitate declining commitment by members.



Once again, the implications for policymakers are not straightforward. It is often necessary to stimulate the development of networks where they do not currently exist, for example, by funding an external facilitator (or, in England's case, by designating and funding Teaching Schools to lead the development of alliances). Developing formalised governance structures in these ways can support sustainability and avoid too much reliance on individual relationships. However, too much structure can stifle the ownership that can make partnerships powerful.

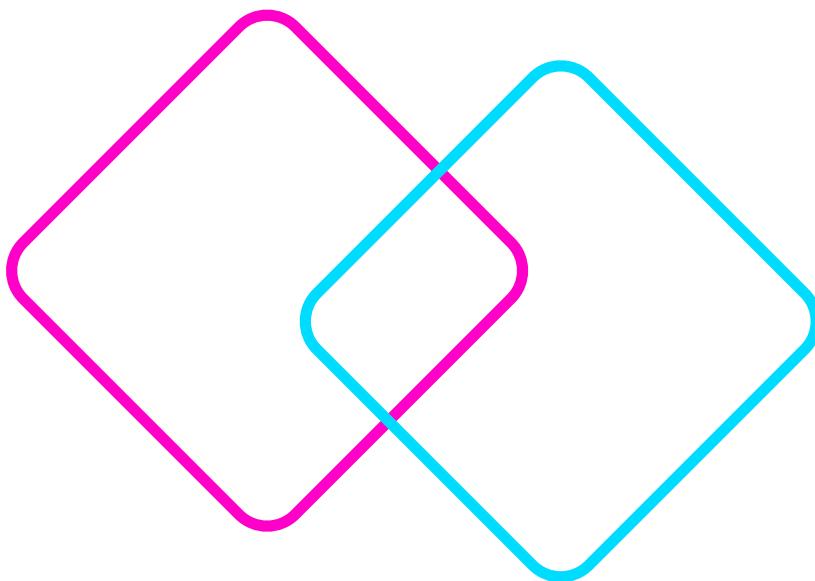
Fourth, research highlights several design principles or features that are important for networks to be effective, including having shared goals, engagement at appropriate levels from within partner organisations, sufficient resources (including time) and shared protocols and routines that guide action, structure knowledge mobilisation and support impact. Hargreaves, Parsley and Cox⁴⁷ provide a useful synthesis of these principles, arguing that it is important to establish clear expectations in terms of member participation and accountability and that, according to Evans and Stone-Johnson, 'networking can be learned'.⁴⁸ The implication for policy is that network leaders need to be helped to understand and develop these protocols and routines, through a continuing process of professional development and support, often provided by partner universities.

Fifth, education networks are invariably focused on 'moving knowledge around' between schools,⁴⁹ but doing this successfully requires sophisticated skills, backed by supportive processes. The challenge is not only to share knowledge and expertise between teachers and classrooms, but to ensure that the resulting practices are actually more effective than what went before – that is, to avoid recycling low-level practices. Many networks identify 'lead or expert practitioners' who are charged with facilitating these processes, but an approach that is founded on a one-way transfer of knowledge (from the 'expert' practitioner to their, by implication, 'less expert' peers) is likely to excite resistance, and risks trying to 'drag and drop' practices without consideration of how they might need to be adapted for different contexts.

Research on knowledge sharing⁵⁰ suggests that knowledge is not simply 'transferred' from one context to another, but rather continuously reviewed and transformed as it is taken into different settings, although there are differences between tacit and explicit/codified knowledge. Networks can benefit from fostering 'joint practice development'⁵¹ routines and approaches that support the articulation and sharing of knowledge as teachers engage in addressing shared problems of practice.^{52,53} Policymakers should encourage network leaders to clarify their theory of action in relation to knowledge mobilisation, and should facilitate this through the provision of a robust knowledge and data architecture that supports evaluation, benchmarking and sharing between schools and networks.

Lastly, leading and managing networks requires sophisticated 'network competencies', but such skills and agency are not universally present. This can be particularly true in the context of schools, which tend to be relatively hierarchical and internally focused organisations, meaning that few senior leaders have significant experience of the kinds of lateral 'systems leadership' required.⁵⁴ Popp et al. argue that network leaders must nurture a network culture that:

*Addresses competing interests, politics and power differentials; and that promotes trusting relationships, curiosity, conscious interest in gaining different perspectives, and respect for diversity of views among organizations.*⁵⁵



However, according to Vangen and Huxham, gaining and maintaining momentum in networks can require a degree of ‘collaborative thuggery’, where network leaders need to manipulate agendas or play the politics to move things forward.⁵⁶ With this in mind, policymakers should be prepared to invest in developing and deepening these skills over an extended time period, potentially by linking networks to appropriately skilled universities.

Conclusion

Returning to our imaginary school leader at the start of this chapter, it is clear that if they are part of a mature, high-trust network, they and their teams will be able to turn to their partners for ideas and support, as they address their tricky or intractable challenge. Networks, partnerships and collaboration between schools thus offer the potential for significant benefits in terms of knowledge sharing, innovation and the achievement of shared educational goals. The big lesson is, perhaps, that networks cannot be seen in isolation from other aspects of system reform.

Furthermore, we’ve seen that policy can support the development of successful networks, although doing so requires a sophisticated, long-term approach that goes beyond simply providing funding or mandating participation by schools. England’s ‘self-improving, school-led system’ reforms provide many lessons here, both in terms of more and less successful approaches. Getting the balance right between individual school autonomy and accountability, together with network-level collaboration and equitable outcomes, may be key to inclusive improvement that meets the needs of all schools. Or, as Suggett concludes:

*Exposure to networks alone does not do the hard work of school improvement or transformation – even when they are well-resourced. Collaboration and relationship building open the door to an agenda for change and professional learning but it appears it is at the whole school organisational level where engagement and collaboration needs to gain traction to impact on school improvement.*⁵⁷

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Leading school-to-school collaboration to improve teaching and learning

Marie-Claire Bretherton

An executive headteacher in England introduces her successful approaches for harnessing the power of school-to-school collaboration to bring about sustainable improvements to teaching and learning across the group of schools under her responsibility.

I became headteacher of Benjamin Adlard Primary School in March 2015, just four months after the school had been rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted, our school quality regulator. The school serves a very challenging community, in a small town in rural Lincolnshire. Two-thirds of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, and a similarly high proportion have special educational needs, while the community itself experiences significant deprivation. The school had previously been deemed 'satisfactory' (although requiring improvement) by Ofsted, but it had never been graded 'good'.

When I agreed to take on the role, I was absolutely terrified, and needed to rapidly rethink my capacity and grow the team around me. I was to continue as the headteacher of two other schools at the same time, a role known in England as 'executive headship', and I knew I would need help. However, I was convinced that the key to sustainable improvement in teaching and learning at Benjamin Adlard was linked to helping teachers learn through powerful, hope-filled connections with other teachers and leaders in our partnership of schools.

I also wanted to believe that the partnership had the collective capacity and expertise to transform the school – not by replacing the teachers, but by restoring them, redeeming them and nourishing them back to life. So, we set to work, and 18 months later, in June 2016, the school was graded 'good' for the first time in its history – and we achieved it with the same teachers in post.

There were three main design principles that guided our work to improve teaching and learning.

Cultivating a frontline obsession

What do I mean by a 'frontline obsession'? The most mission-critical interactions in our schools will be between the teachers and the students – that is the 'frontline'. Everything we do should be focused on how to make that interaction and relationship more effective. I believe, as leaders, we should be obsessed with what happens in our classrooms every day and, therefore, obsessed with teacher development. In the same way an entrepreneur is obsessed with the quality of their new, innovative product, we too should be obsessed with refining, improving and sharing the very best practice in our classrooms.

A frontline obsession is something that must be embedded in the school culture; the centrality of learners and learning must, therefore, be explicit in our everyday language. One measure, captured brilliantly by Tim Brighouse, could be the degree to which 'teachers TALK about teaching; teachers OBSERVE each other teach; teachers plan, organise and evaluate TOGETHER; teachers teach EACH OTHER'.¹

To develop a frontline obsession, and improve the quality of teaching and learning in a group of schools, there must be high social capital between colleagues. High social capital consists of two elements: trust and reciprocity. Trust is critical in building a sustainable relationship between teachers. It has many elements. At its basic level, the teachers show goodwill towards one another. Beyond this, teachers move to a stage of being more open and honest with one another and building the reliability (consistency, dependability) and the competence that commands respect. Trust is built slowly, especially for teachers who may have to share fears and anxieties, as well as hopes and aspirations about their practice.

The idea of reciprocity is the sense of sharing and having an obligation for mutual exchange. For example, if I offer you a gift or help, you feel you want to give me something in return. Reciprocity arises when there is some level of trust, which is perhaps no more than just goodwill, but which, once it takes place, increases the level of trust. When there is a high level of social capital between colleagues in a group of schools, teachers begin to share their intellectual capital – that is, their knowledge, skills and experience. And that is where the magic happens!

At Benjamin Adlard, two approaches were crucial to developing this frontline obsession and building trust between colleagues. The first was a tool called teacher tracker, and the second was a strategy we called IMPact (Improving my practice through action) teams.

Teacher tracker

We developed the teacher tracker by working with teachers across our group of schools to draw together our collective view of effective teaching and learning, which we used to design a framework of teacher competencies.

From research, we knew the competencies that make the biggest difference and yield the greatest results are:

- a teacher's instructional delivery
- a teacher's classroom management
- the use of formative assessment
- personal competencies (softer skills).

The teacher tracker captures and describes these competencies in a teacher-friendly way, in their own words.

The tool is used first by teachers to review their own practice and assess how well they feel they are developing in their role, in relation to these competencies and across different subjects. The teacher then meets with a nominated middle or senior leader to share their tracker and discuss an area they believe they are doing well and making improvements in, and an area they have identified as something they need to focus on.

This one-hour coaching session culminates in the teacher making a commitment about how they are going to improve their practice. For example:

- Who could they observe?
- What should they read?
- What does the research say?
- Who should they talk to or visit?

If appropriate, the coach then works with them in class, perhaps through team teaching or observation, to support teacher learning.

From a leadership perspective, the teacher tracker has been incredibly useful, as it has enabled us to collate and analyse teacher development and professional learning needs. We can then identify the common areas, subjects and skills that our teachers need to develop so professional development can be targeted to meet their needs.

When implementing this approach, we learned how important joint determination is to creating strong teacher buy-in. Defining what effective practice and teacher competency looks like in *our school* and in *our context*, and using research and evidence to develop collective understanding, was powerful. In addition, the strategy only worked because we had middle and senior leaders who are trained in coaching and mentoring, and who are competent practitioners themselves.



IMPact teams

IMPact teams are essentially triads of teachers who are selected to work together to improve their practice based on a 'joint practice development' approach. They are teachers from different schools who work in the same phase or year group, and work together over a minimum of 12 months.

To make this possible, we restructured the timetables across the schools so that teacher non-contact time happened at the same time for all teachers in a given year group, and so that professional learning time (staff meetings) was on the same day, after school. We made sure our curriculum model was aligned, so that teachers had meaningful content, ideas and resources to share. We made it non-negotiable that teachers share student work together when they met to discuss students' next steps in learning and any gaps. We also varied the days of the training so that teachers could visit other schools in the partnership to watch teaching and learning in action.

These triads have a clear focus for their work together and follow the cycle of design, teach, assess, share, reflect, evaluate, inquiry, with the focus being on the students and the progress they are making. The triads must have a basis for action, but can iterate and then iterate again, making adjustments and changes as needed. The purpose of the work is clear: it's about improving student outcomes through improved teacher instruction, classroom management and formative assessment.

It was critical for the work of the triad to include a commitment, something like:

I will focus on the following students who currently have the following need If I'm successful in meeting their needs, instead of seeing, I will see in my lesson and in their work.

IMPact teams have also had the added benefit of creating relationships between staff, which can be useful when it comes to redeploying staff to work in other schools in the partnership, as the barriers have already come down through collaborative work. As Margaret Wheatley puts it: 'There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.'² As we grew our community of schools, the IMPact teams, by focusing on pupils in each other's classes, helped to build a shared sense of moral purpose and a deep commitment to seeing children and teachers flourish.

Harnessing the power of networks

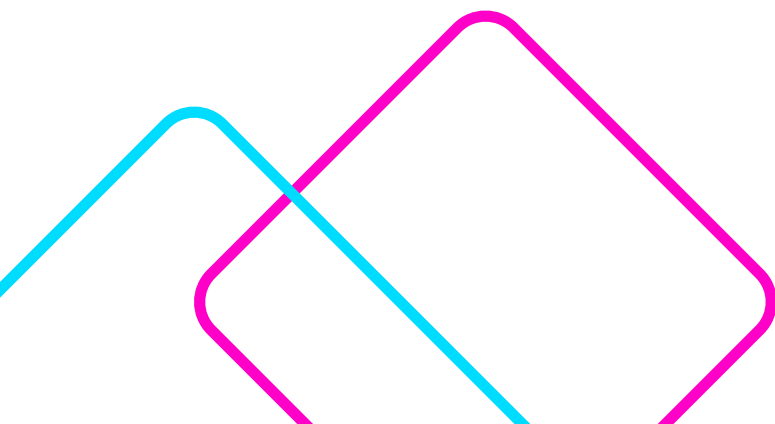
A robust, focused peer-review system between schools has been an excellent way of benchmarking our practice and learning from other schools. The key for us has been developing teacher-to-teacher, subject-to-subject and pupil-to-pupil peer reviews – always asking: what is the experience of learning for this child in this lesson?

Using student voice in the peer-review process has become a powerful lever for change. We set up the Kyra Kid's Council, a group of children from different schools in the partnership who regularly visit schools to support improvement through pupil-led peer reviews. They examine an area the school has been trying to improve and give feedback to the headteacher or senior leadership team.

This has been really powerful. Primary-aged children generally love their school; they usually don't have much to compare it to, but when you take them out of context and into other schools to look at learning, the classroom environment, behaviour in lessons, routines, presentation of work and resources, they often have very insightful and important things to say.

Of course, we've had to help this group of pupils understand how to give effective feedback, by providing them with sentences to frame their observations, for example, 'I expected to see this ... but instead I saw that ...', 'I noticed A, B and C' or 'When the teacher did X I heard the children say Y.' This has helped to create a developmental, non-judgemental culture.

It's heartening to see that these pupils have a sense that children in other schools matter, that learning matters, that we are all trying to be the best that we can be, and that we are all part of the same wider community. Not only do the pupils share their views on the school they have visited, but they also go back to their own school with ideas and experiences that can help shape practice. This is the power of the network.



Teacher leadership matrix

Another example of how we tried to harness the power of the partnership to create opportunities for teacher development is the teacher leadership matrix. This time, the focus is on the development of teachers as leaders and learners beyond their own classroom, i.e. career development.

As a partnership of schools, we had tinkered with the odd secondment and organised a few *ad hoc* visits to each other's schools, and a few keen teachers got involved in coaching colleagues or observing leadership team meetings in another school. But we wanted to make these kinds of opportunities visible and accessible for every teacher within the group of schools. In response, we created the teacher leadership matrix, which is essentially a progressive list (from early career to established leader) of:

- in-school opportunities to learn, shadow a colleague, observe lessons, coach, lead staff training, give presentations or lead an aspect of school improvement – all with feedback and support from a mentor in the school
- cross-school learning opportunities, such as, secondments to other schools, paired visits, shadowing other leaders, coaching someone in another school, leading school-to-school support and leading work on behalf of the group of schools
- formal continuing professional development opportunities available within the partnership.

This was our way of aligning professional development processes, content and activities, thereby creating opportunities for teacher learning that are consistent across the group of schools. Many schools have adopted this matrix as part of their professional development offer.

When implementing this approach, we began by identifying and auditing strengths, expertise and opportunities in all our schools. We also needed to invest in colleagues by ensuring they were trained in effective school-to-school support, for example, coaching and mentoring, joint practice development, building rapport and skilling-up others. There was also some work to do on building the culture and creating a belief that teacher and leadership development should be everyone's responsibility.

Building capacity by empowering the frontline

I've spoken about teacher development at the school and partnership levels – cultivating a frontline obsession – and the role of the wider network or partnership in driving and supporting improvements in teaching and learning. Now, I want to focus on the role of evidence-informed school improvement. How do you know what works, and how do you share knowledge and practice so that every teacher can learn and adapt their practice?

It's good to highlight one example of how we are seeing evidence-informed practice have an effect across our group of schools.

The Mobilise project

Our partnership of schools is just about to embark on our fourth year of leading a project in Lincolnshire called Mobilise. We chose this name because our aim was to mobilise the knowledge in the system and see it have an impact in classrooms right across the county. The work is led through a professional learning community model, and we are actively working in just over 300 schools and reaching around 2,875 teachers in such communities.



The ultimate aim of Mobilise is to build an effective cluster-based, school-to-school infrastructure, which will enable every teacher to be evidence-informed and evidence-ready in the future. This means they are able to rapidly understand, respond to and implement recommendations from research in their school. We aim to equip teachers and leaders to become champions of the evidence and to transform outcomes for pupils as a result.

The much-lamented gap between educational research and instructional practice results, in part, from the fact that the presentation of research findings is rarely calibrated to the problems encountered by teachers. Teachers often feel that research isn't relevant to their practice, or they don't know how to translate the evidence into changed ways of working.

The professional learning community model has created a way in which participants can actively seek out and carry out research that addresses group concerns; they can reflect deeply on existing research and, subsequently, on improving practice. This type of exploration and thinking deepens teachers' understanding of student learning and draws on the group's collective capacity to generate responses to instructional dilemmas.

Through this approach, teachers have studied cognitive theory and memory, feedback and marking, curriculum design, emotional health and well-being, the effective deployment of teaching assistants, and the latest recommendations from the Education Endowment Foundation on English and maths. This is one of the ways we are trying to empower the frontline, equip them with the evidence and build teacher capacity and efficacy.

The central question for larger groups of schools working in collaboration is how to set up a learning infrastructure so that evidence can reach the classroom efficiently and with fidelity. This is what empowers the frontline and keeps the profession learning.

Conclusion

To conclude, these are just some of the ways we are seeking to improve teaching and learning in our group of schools. For us, the key has been to align the strategy and be clear on the purpose and impact of our work, as well as the time and commitment needed to make it worthwhile.

In essence, this is what we've tried to do:

1. Cultivate a frontline obsession – build social capital, create active collaborators, and build a culture of reciprocity.
2. Harness the power of the network – use the group to improve the group, build teacher efficacy, and make learning opportunities systematic and accessible to all.
3. Build capacity by empowering the frontline – use evidence-informed practices to transform what happens in classrooms, and amplify the voices of our teachers and our young people.

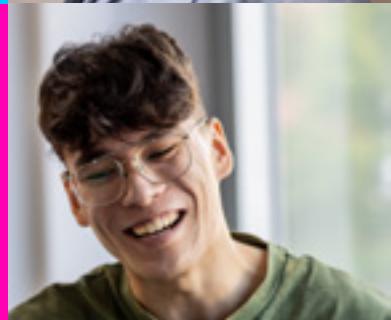
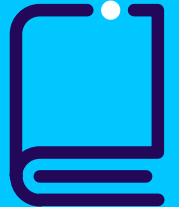
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Section three:

School leadership in practice



School leadership standards in use in Nigeria: what difference do they make?

Professor Josiah Olusegun Ajiboye, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan

Introduction

The role of school leaders, particularly principals and administrators, has become more complex and multifaceted, requiring a clear set of standards to navigate the challenges of modern education.¹ Effective school leadership is crucial for improving student achievement, supporting teachers, and ensuring a positive school climate,² and the evolving educational landscape has prompted a renewed focus on its importance.

School leadership standards are sets of guidelines and benchmarks used to define the skills, knowledge, and behaviours expected of school leaders, particularly principals and administrators. Such standards are often developed by educational organisations and agencies to ensure school leaders are effectively prepared to improve teaching and learning outcomes. They are essential frameworks that guide leaders in effectively managing schools, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering positive school environments, by outlining requisite competencies, ethical guidelines, and effective practices. Leadership standards are increasingly recognised as critical tools for guiding school leaders in fostering academic excellence, equitable learning environments, and effective school management.³

Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, state that 'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning', and go on to highlight the kind of leadership that impacts most significantly on student outcomes: 'successful school leadership focuses on developing teachers' skills, providing instructional support, and monitoring student learning.' School leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education, with effective leaders being able to inspire teachers, motivate students, and foster an environment conducive to learning. Various professional standards have been developed globally to ensure school leaders are well-prepared for these responsibilities.

This paper examines the role of school leadership standards, their implementation, and the difference they make in educational outcomes, focusing on the Professional Standard for School Leadership in Nigeria.

School leadership standards serve multiple purposes:

- They provide a clear framework for what constitutes effective school leadership, outlining the skills, knowledge, and behaviours expected of school leaders.
- They inform school leaders' training and continuous professional development, ensuring they remain competent and effective.
- They create a basis for evaluating the performance of school leaders, promoting accountability and transparency in school administration.
- They help to ensure consistency and equity in the quality of leadership across different schools and districts by setting uniform expectations.

School leadership standards are often derived from educational theories and models that emphasise effective leadership practices, such as the instructional leadership model by Philip Hallinger, which focuses on leaders' roles in improving teaching and learning processes. Another is the transformational leadership model developed by James Burns, which highlights the importance of inspiring and motivating staff and students. These models underline a leader's need to be visionary, ethical, and adept at managing change.

Key school leadership standards

Various organisations and countries have developed comprehensive leadership standards. For example, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) from the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in America, and the Professional Standards for School Leadership in Nigeria, from the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, are widely recognised. Common elements across these standards include:

1. **Visionary leadership:** establishing and communicating a clear, compelling vision for the school.
2. **Instructional leadership:** focusing on curriculum, teaching, and learning improvements.
3. **Organisational management:** efficiently managing school resources and operations.
4. **Community collaboration:** building strong relationships with families and the community.
5. **Ethical leadership:** promoting integrity, fairness, and ethical behaviour.
6. **Equity and cultural responsiveness:** ensuring an inclusive environment that respects diversity.

Implementation of leadership standards

The implementation of leadership standards involves several steps:

1. **Training and professional development:** school leaders receive training aligned with the standards. This includes workshops, seminars, and ongoing professional development programmes, ensuring school leaders acquire, build and retain the necessary skills and knowledge.
2. **Performance evaluation and feedback:** regular assessments and evaluations of leaders based on the standards help monitor and improve the effectiveness of school leaders.
3. **Policy integration:** educational policies at district and state levels often incorporate the standards, ensuring they guide decision making processes.
4. **Mentoring and support:** experienced leaders mentor new leaders to help them understand and apply the standards effectively.
5. **Policy integration:** embedding leadership standards into educational policies and governance structures promotes a consistent and systemic approach to school leadership.



Impact of school leadership standards

Research indicates that effective implementation of leadership standards significantly impacts educational outcomes:

1. **Student achievement:** schools led by leaders who adhere to the relevant standards often report higher student achievement levels, with research finding a strong correlation between leadership quality and student performance.⁴
2. **Teacher morale and retention:** leadership standards that emphasise supportive and collaborative environments contribute to higher teacher morale and lower turnover rates.⁵
3. **School climate:** adherence to ethical and inclusive practices fosters a positive school climate, which is crucial for student well-being, academic success and continuous improvement.⁶
4. **Community engagement:** standards that promote community collaboration enhance parental involvement and community support, leading to a more holistic educational experience for students. School leaders who follow established standards engage effectively with the broader community, building trust and collaboration that enhance the educational experience.⁷
5. **Informed decision making:** standards guide leaders in making informed, data-driven decisions that align with best practices in education.⁸
6. **Stakeholder confidence:** clear standards help build trust and confidence among stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the broader community.⁹

The Nigerian experience

In Nigeria the educational system has undergone significant transformation in recent years, with a growing emphasis on improving school leadership as a key factor in enhancing educational outcomes. The Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Education and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria and in collaboration with the British Council and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (FCDO-PLANE) along with subnational level stakeholders, have reviewed the existing school leadership standards to align with global best practices while addressing the unique challenges of the Nigerian educational context.

The revised standards focus on five domains:

- Promoting school improvement and innovation.
- Leading teaching and learning.
- Developing self and others.
- Leading and managing the school.
- Engaging and working with the community.

The implementation of the standards in Nigeria has generally been a great success, although the metrics used to measure this vary across different locations. In urban areas where leadership standards were rigorously implemented, significant improvements were observed in student test scores and graduation rates. In rural areas where leadership standards were tailored to the unique challenges of rural schools, there was better resource management and community involvement, leading to improved educational outcomes.



Practically, the implementation of the standards has had a tremendous impact:

- The adoption of leadership standards has been linked to improved student performance in various regions of Nigeria. Schools led by principals who adhere to these standards have shown better results in national exams and overall student achievement.¹⁰
- Leadership standards have informed the development of professional training programmes for school leaders, providing continuous professional development and ensuring leaders are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge.
- Principals and headteachers trained under the standards are more effective in managing school operations – something that has been evidenced in the recent competency assessments carried out with school leaders, which focused on the five domains of the leadership standards. These improvements have led to more efficient use of resources, better school environments, and increased accountability.
- School leaders who follow the established standards are more successful in engaging with their communities. This involvement has fostered stronger support networks for schools, improving student attendance and reducing dropout rates.
- The standards have helped in the effective implementation of educational policies at grass roots level. School leaders serve as the link between policy directives from the government and their execution within schools, ensuring that reforms reach and benefit students.

Despite the progress, challenges remain in the widespread implementation of leadership standards across Nigeria. Variations in resources, regional disparities, and the need for ongoing professional development are significant hurdles. However, the successes observed regionally provide a blueprint for scaling up these efforts nationwide.

Building on this solid foundation, the future involves continuous refinement of the standards to meet evolving educational needs, increased investment in leadership training programmes, and robust monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure compliance and measure impact.

Challenges and recommendations

Despite their clear benefits, the implementation of leadership standards does face some challenges:

1. **Resource constraints:** limited funding for training and professional development can hinder effective implementation.
2. **Resistance to change:** some leaders and staff may resist new standards, preferring traditional methods.
3. **Contextual variability:** one-size-fits-all standards may not address the unique needs of every school.

It is hoped the following recommendations will address these challenges:

1. **Customised training programmes:** tailoring professional development to the specific needs of different schools.
2. **Incentives for professional development:** providing incentives for leaders to engage in continuous learning.
3. **Collaborative standards development:** involving a wide range of stakeholders in developing and revising leadership standards to ensure they are relevant

Conclusion

The implementation of school leadership standards plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness and success of educational institutions. They provide a comprehensive framework that defines the essential skills, knowledge, and behaviours required of school leaders. By adhering to them, school leaders are better equipped to foster an environment conducive to high quality teaching and learning.

The impact of school leadership standards is evident in multiple facets of school operation and student outcomes. Research consistently shows that effective school leadership is strongly correlated with improved student achievement, and by following established standards, leaders are able to implement evidence-based strategies that enhance instructional practices and support teacher development. This leads to a more cohesive and effective teaching environment, directly benefiting student learning experiences.

Furthermore, the consistency and accountability provided by leadership standards ensure that school leaders across contexts and regions maintain a high level of professionalism and effectiveness. This uniformity helps in evaluating and developing leadership practices, making it easier to identify areas for improvement and to share effective practices. Leadership standards also inform the design and implementation of professional development programmes, ensuring that leaders continuously grow and adapt to the evolving demands of their roles.

Informed decision making is another critical benefit of adhering to leadership standards. By guiding leaders in making data-driven decisions, the standards help ensure that actions taken within schools are aligned with best practice and are most likely to yield positive outcomes. This strategic approach to leadership not only enhances student achievement but also improves overall school performance.

Moreover, effective school leadership, guided by clear standards, contributes to a positive school culture. A culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement is essential for sustaining educational excellence. Leadership standards help cultivate this culture by promoting ethical behavior, integrity, and a shared vision for success.

The adoption of school leadership standards builds trust and confidence among stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the broader community. When school leaders operate within a framework of established standards, it reassures stakeholders that the school is being managed effectively and ethically, fostering a supportive and engaged school community.

In conclusion, school leadership standards make a significant difference to the quality of education. They ensure that school leaders are well prepared, accountable, and capable of driving improvements in teaching and learning. As educational landscapes continue to evolve, the importance of robust leadership standards will remain crucial in achieving sustained success and excellence in schools.

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Educational leadership: fostering exemplary models through the National Teachers' Awards in India

Professor Yagnamurthy Sreekanth, Professor in Education (Assessment Studies) and Principal, Regional Institute of Education, Mysuru

Introduction

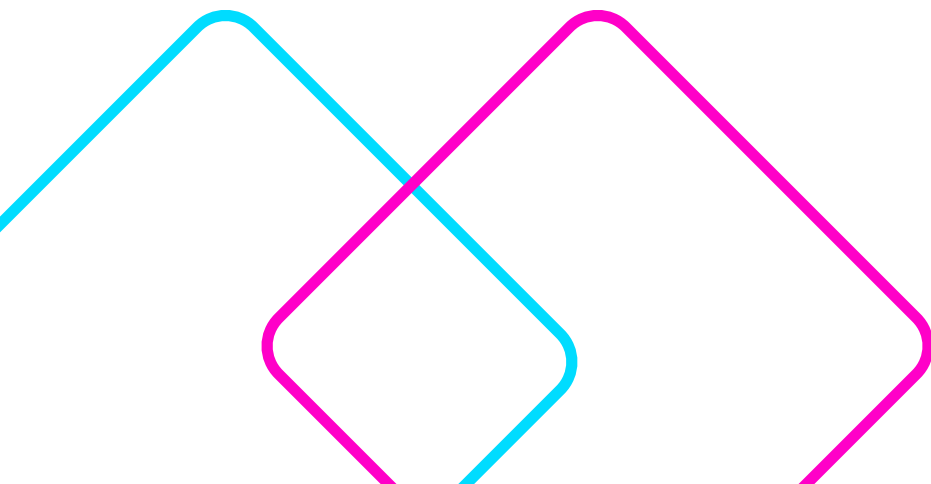
In the context of school reform, effective academic and administrative leadership serves as a cornerstone. Teachers and school administrators engage in a multitude of official and personal initiatives to enhance school efficacy, so identifying the key parameters influencing school effectiveness and offering guidance to educators and principals on aligning their efforts accordingly is essential. The establishment of the National Teachers' Awards (NTA) by the Department of School Education and Literacy in 1958 aimed to acknowledge the dedication and excellence of educators in shaping young minds and future generations. The NTA not only celebrates the accomplishments of the recipients but also serves as a roadmap for myriad other educators on how to excel in their roles. The criteria for selection, periodically revised, particularly in 2018, empower teachers to enhance their performance standards and strive for national recognition.

The NTA acknowledges not only teachers, but also school principals and headteachers who hold formal leadership roles in educational institutions. The selection process involves a mix of objective and subjective criteria, with a 10 per cent and 90 per cent weighting, respectively. This process entails self-nomination followed by evaluations conducted at district, state, regional, and organisational levels, culminating in a final assessment by a national level independent jury.

To examine the contributions of the National Teachers' Awardees to the educational system, two in-depth case studies were conducted. The first case study is from a conflict-ridden area, and the second is from a remote rural area. To protect the privacy of the awardees, pseudonyms are used, and specific geographical locations have been removed. These teachers view the award as a significant social recognition conferred by the President of India, bringing their achievements to the attention of the entire nation, and believe the standards set by the award are very high and diverse. In an era where many from Generation Z opt for careers in ICT, making teaching seem less valuable, this award highlights the critical role of teachers in the country. It validates their accomplishments, as NTA recipients are widely recognised and celebrated in the media. They also perceive that while state or provincial-level awards provide significant recognition, the national award places them at the highest level. This recognition not only motivates the winning teachers but also inspires others to contribute better.

Rahim

Rahim, a teacher working in a Scheduled Tribe-dominated area, has been actively engaging in girls' education. Initially, parents were reluctant to send their girls to school, but Rahim's regular visits to the homes of these girls, offering storytelling, and providing them with dolls, school bags, and toiletry items, helped persuade reluctant parents otherwise. He also extended the canteen facility at the Central Reserve Police Force to orphaned students, providing them with necessities such as hair oil, food packets, and medicines. He built an 'open library' accessible to all, and recognising his efforts, a local bookshop keeper sold him books worth 130,000 rupees for only 3,500 hundred rupees. Rahim's efforts led families that initially did not permit girls to travel just the two kilometres to school, to eventually send them to attend a 15–20 day



winter snow scaling camp located 150 kilometres away. The number of girls in his elementary school increased from seven in 2009 to 68 in 2023. Rahim's deep involvement with the school is reflected in his statement 'students are my children' and his teetotaler lifestyle has helped gain the villagers' confidence. His influence extends beyond education to family events such as marriages, where his opinions on grooms are valued by parents.

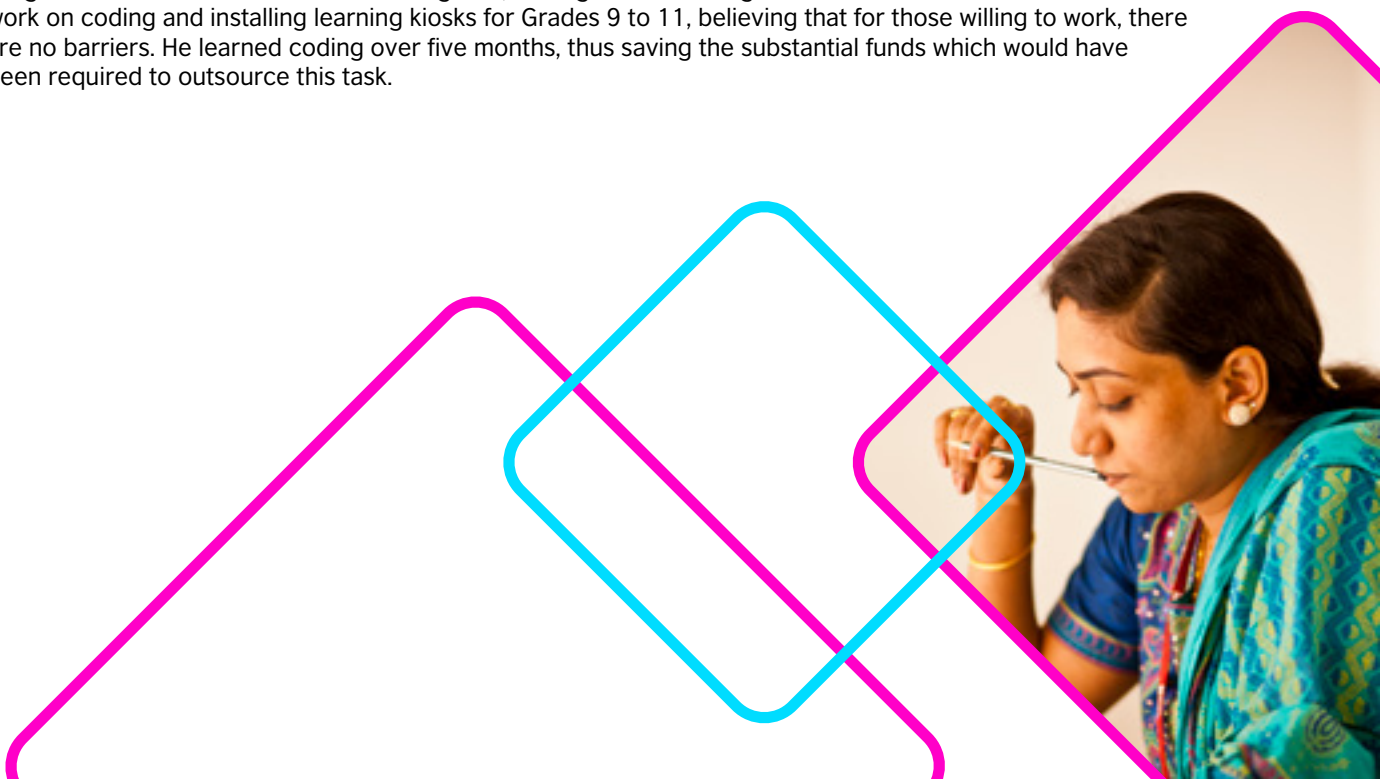
Teachers from other schools visit Rahim's school, and his students provide computer orientation to these visitors. At the end of the day, prizes are awarded to those who respond positively to basic questions on computer learning. Rahim's work inspired senior officers like the Senior Superintendent of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of the district, who contributed 350,000 rupees for computers, speakers, a projector, and other equipment. Although there was resistance from the local village to the visit of these officials due to the area's conflict-ridden nature, the villagers were convinced after receiving additional funds and understanding the future benefits supported by the district administration. Rahim continues to pursue high quality education for his students and the development of the village, yielding results through donations such as dustbins from the tourism department, stationery and school bags from the social welfare department, and pipes for constructing a swing for students from the public works department.

Rahim, despite not holding a formal leadership position, has proactively sought to enhance the school's operations by securing community support. As a teacher-leader, he has earned the trust of students, the community, and local administrators. His unwavering dedication to promoting girls' education is inspiring, and he has helped successfully transform his school into a model institution in the area.

Rajesh

Rajesh, who has been working as a primary teacher since 2004, has made drinking water and sanitation facilities accessible to school students through his initiatives, improving the school's infrastructure and increasing enrolment. He has taken a keen interest in beautifying the school using community-generated resources, and his work during the COVID-19 pandemic received state-wide recognition. His innovative method of conducting classes through a mobile digital school, which he called Shiksha Rath (School on Wheels), was featured by the BBC. He fitted a 42-inch TV and a laptop in his small car, using a power inverter where no external electricity was available. He delivered classes using state-developed video content, spending three hours daily in school and three hours teaching neighbourhood students, who believe his support mitigated their educational losses in the pandemic. During the rainy season, he used a bicycle instead of his car, fitting it with a laptop and speaker. His unique innovation, 'Anytime Education' similar to an ATM, involved loading machines with videos for Grades 1-8, installed not only in the school but also in marketplaces. These kiosks, running on solar energy, became popular with both students and parents.

Although learning levels initially declined during the pandemic, the introduction of the school on wheels reversed that trend. Rajesh's work received immense appreciation from the community and surrounding villages. The Chief Minister sent his congratulations, and the District Education Officer and the Deputy Commissioner of the district visited his school, encouraging other school principals to seek his guidance, and he received enquiries from Indians settled abroad about contributing to the cause. His efforts garnered community support and funds, enabling him to set up a school theatre with a big projector for educational programmes. The school received an A+ grade, the highest according to state standards. He continues to work on coding and installing learning kiosks for Grades 9 to 11, believing that for those willing to work, there are no barriers. He learned coding over five months, thus saving the substantial funds which would have been required to outsource this task.



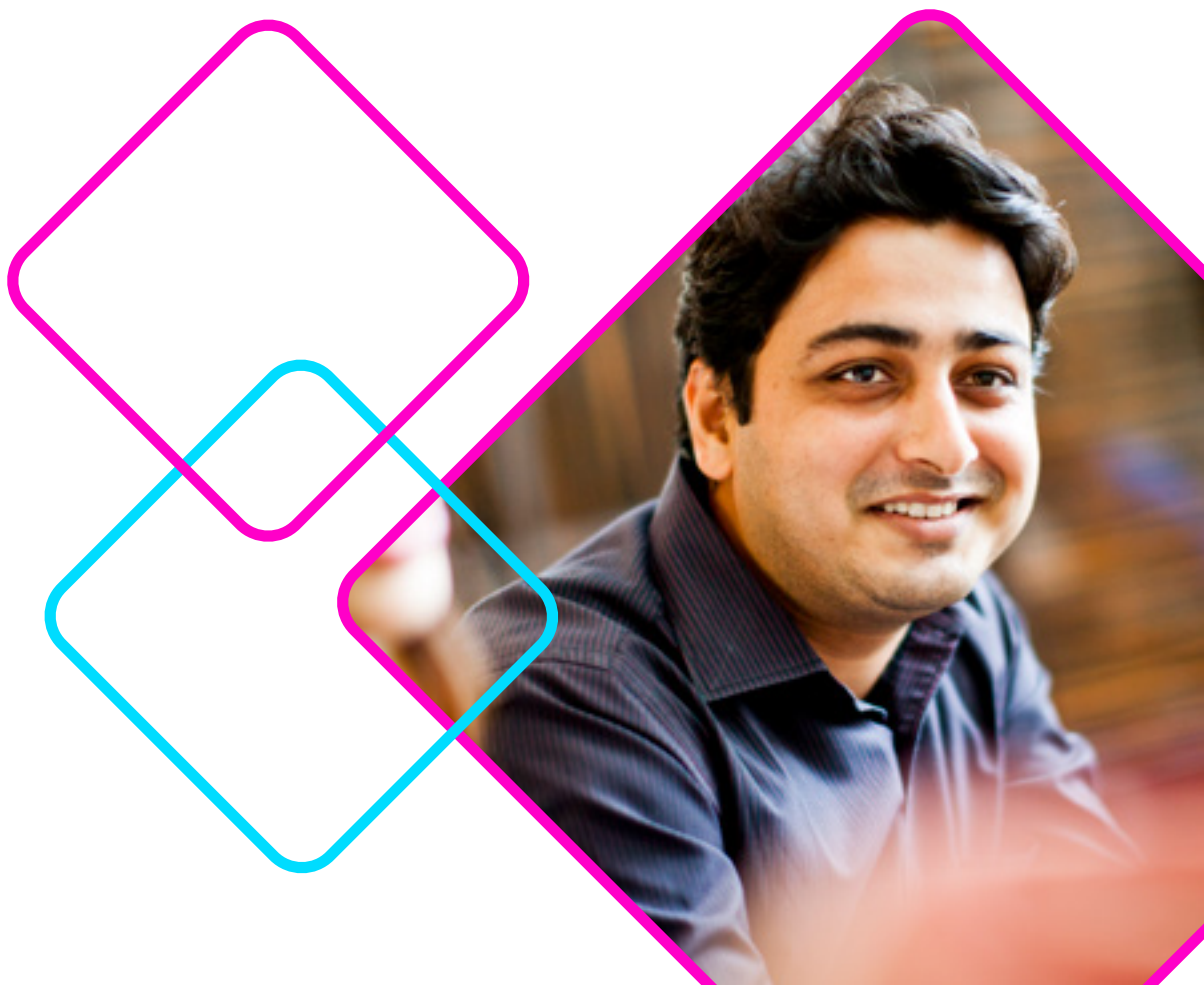
Rajesh has demonstrated his adaptive leadership abilities by effectively addressing the needs of students during the challenging COVID-19 period through the use of information and communication technology. His strong commitment to the school and community has motivated him to work beyond regular school hours, and as a teacher-leader, he has exceeded expectations by continuously enhancing his skills and introducing innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Both Rahim and Rajesh have made remarkable contributions to education in their respective areas through their dedication, innovative approaches, and deep community involvement. Rahim's work is characterised by his grassroots efforts in a conflict-ridden area, focusing on increasing girls' education and community trust. Rajesh stands out for his technological innovations during the pandemic and his success in rallying community and international support. Both teachers have not only improved educational outcomes but also significantly enhanced their communities' perceptions of the value of education.

The evolving role of NTA awardees is evident from their multifaceted contributions; these professionals are no longer confined to traditional roles but are encouraged to spearhead initiatives that transform the educational landscape both within and beyond school boundaries. Academic reforms emphasise student-centric learning approaches, inclusive classroom environments, and the development of soft skills. ICT related innovations have proven instrumental in enabling both teachers and learners to adapt to challenges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have ensured the continued connectivity and engagement of learners. The emphasis on community engagement underscores the need for schools and educators to actively participate in community affairs and address societal needs for holistic school transformation.

Both Rahim and Rajesh, as teacher-leaders, have a deeply ingrained commitment to serving students and the community, consistently going above and beyond to advocate for their interests. They have effectively generated and utilised resources, exemplifying the qualities of true leadership. The synergy between their leadership roles and their communities' responses has become so seamless that it is challenging to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. The two leaders have demonstrated exceptional transformational leadership qualities by effectively converting challenging circumstances into opportunities. In conclusion, the NTA serves as a platform for recognising the diverse contributions of teachers and principals, guiding and inspiring others in the educational realm to strive for excellence beyond their prescribed roles.



The role of the headteacher in raising the quality of education in Iraq

Ammar Tariq, Head of Education, British Council Iraq, and Emma Sarton, Senior Education Advisor, Cambridge Education

For decades, headteachers in Iraq largely undertook administrative roles as set out in legislation from 1978. There was no unified set of standards embedded in the system to guide school leaders, and no process for external evaluation or school assessment to hold them accountable for student outcomes. The school inspection process was very much an exercise in fault finding and apportioning blame, rather than being used as part of a development process for leaders and staff. No formal analysis was performed on inspection results, meaning opportunities to identify areas for development were routinely missed. There was a limited number of supervisors, each of whom worked with huge numbers of schools, although the systems in place meant that headteachers had very limited authority over their staff.

In 2022 the British Council, in partnership with the European Commission in Iraq and the ministries of Education, ran a programme that aimed to improve quality and equality in schools by building capacity among educators, with a particular focus on the role of headteachers and empowering them to take a leading role. This 'Developing School' concept was based on three pillars of school development to drive change: external evaluation of schools, headteachers as leaders, and the supervisor as critical friend. The aim was to raise the quality of education through the enhanced quality assurance of schools against a set of standards and then use these results to inform positive development planning. The project was vast in its scope; the new standards framework was developed, evaluation personnel were trained, and the new system was rolled out to over 30,000 schools across the country.

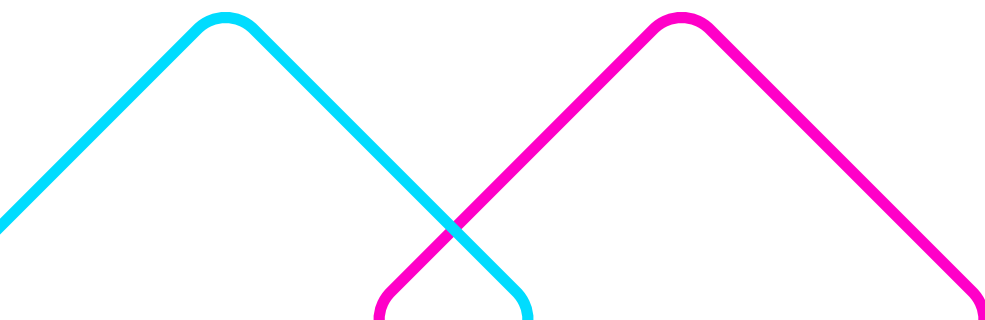
As part of the Developing School concept, the idea of the 'Developer Headteacher' was introduced. Relationships between headteachers and school inspectors were facilitated by the developing school model, and roles and responsibilities were clarified. Under the quality assurance system which evaluates schools, the role of the school inspector has been modified to be that of a 'Critical Friend Supervisor'. The purpose of this role is to empower the headteacher to play a greater role in leading and managing the school by making use of the standards for schools and working towards the school's vision and mission.

The headteacher of Al Hila Primary School in Baghdad said, 'After I participated in the developer headteacher training, a significant change happened. Instead of being a headteacher with personal achievements, I became a leader who could affect others and work through them. Unlike the past, when we followed our instinct to plan for the school, now we have extensive knowledge of the standards, which helps to improve the school's performance. The standards have also helped us to lift our institution and improve our relationship with the local community.'

The 'Developing School' model has enabled school leaders in Iraq to work towards SMART objectives and annual action planning for their schools and has also provided insight and information on how schools are performing at district, province and national levels. This in turn has helped ministries to make informed decisions in areas relating to curriculum, inclusion, and many other aspects that are crucial to deliver a high quality educational offer to over 14,000,000 students.

The success of this ongoing work can be seen in the impressive statistics which emerged from a survey of 3083 headteachers, 20,024 teachers, and 597 supervisors:

- Headteachers are now leaders in their schools, with the power to make changes.
- 94 per cent of headteachers believe their new role and levels of authority will support teachers to develop their skills.
- 93 per cent of headteachers think the new role of the supervisor as a critical friend has helped improve their school.



- 93 per cent of supervisors report improved relationships with headteachers.
- 77 per cent of supervisors think that the headteacher, with the support of a critical friend supervisor, can help teachers develop skills and help improve the school.
- 95 per cent of teachers think the headteacher, with the support of a critical friend supervisor, is helping them develop their teaching skills to help improve students' progress and learning.
- 90 per cent of teachers think the new and strengthened relationships between the headteacher and critical friend supervisor has had a positive impact on the performance of the school.

The effects in local communities have been highly encouraging. Parents and other stakeholders in communities are routinely consulted about and engaged in the external evaluation of schools and are aware of the results. Headteachers actively seek the opinion of parents and the community, with 88 per cent reporting that the role of parent councils has been strengthened and has had positive effects on students and the school in general. This is echoed by findings from the supervisors, 82 per cent of whom noted that relationships between parents and the management of the school had strengthened and that this was having a positive effect on the performance of the school.

This change has contributed significantly to the original outcomes of the capacity building programme and what it aimed to achieve both at policy level and also in terms of day-to-day school life, aiming to enable children – especially those from the vulnerable groups – to reach their full potential.

The headteacher Al Hila Primary School in Baghdad said, 'The training and the whole capacity building programme have opened our eyes to our potential, how to mobilise the community, how to draw the school vision and mission and most importantly, how to support every child in my school. After I returned from the training, I asked my teachers to identify all children at risk of repeating, and some were at risk of being expelled because of the number of years they have repeated. An individual plan was put in for each of them in agreement with teachers; they successfully completed grade five. Our participation in the human rights award brought enthusiasm to the school; our students now know their rights and will become future leaders.'

British Council Iraq, through the Schools Connect programme, is building on the legacy of what has already been achieved in terms of empowering school leaders, by working with all education stakeholders to improve outcomes for all children across the country. As a result of this work, the external evaluation process has been endorsed and embedded in the system through its inclusion in the National Education Strategy for Iraq, 2022–2031.

It seems only fitting that the final word should go to one of the headteachers for whom these developments have had such a profound impact, at the Shaheed Al Mihrab Primary School for Boys:

My understanding of the standards and the external evaluation has completely changed. It used to be 10 per cent, but it reached 99 per cent after the training. My enthusiasm about the application of the standards and the importance of applying them has increased. We designed a development plan for our school at the beginning of the school year. When I returned after the training, I rewrote the plan and got the local community, the local council and the staff involved in writing [it].



Instructional leadership in context

Andy Buck

Where does instructional leadership fit within leadership thinking, and what are the implications for school leaders when applying the approach in practice?

There seems to be a fascination with creating false dichotomies in education. Whether it's the battle for supremacy between knowledge and skills, or the tussle between adopting a zero-tolerance strategy on behaviour versus taking a more child-centred approach, people can't seem to resist polarising issues in a way that isn't often helpful.

In this article, I will:

- argue that we are at risk of creating another false dichotomy when it comes to how we codify effective school leadership
- offer practical suggestions about what one element of this false dichotomy – instructional leadership – looks like in practice.

Broadly speaking, there are two main approaches to codifying school leadership. First, there is what is often referred to as 'transformational leadership', which focuses on a school leader's personal qualities and universal leadership skills, and their ability to create a powerful vision and inspire others to join them on a shared journey to create a better future for all students.

Then there are those who argue that what really matters is leadership knowledge and role-specific expertise, which ensure that school leaders can make good decisions and embark on effective courses of action and implement them successfully. With its strong focus on classroom practice, this approach is often referred to as 'instructional leadership'.

My view is that rather than see these two approaches as a choice or dichotomy, we should consider both perspectives as essential for effective school leadership, tailored to suit the context of the school or team.

Leadership practices

In their seminal work of 2008, *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*, Leithwood et al.¹ made the assertion (in their second claim) that 'almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices'. In 2019, the same authors revisited this work, considering more recent research and evidence. While this second claim has remained unchanged, several additions have been made that describe these actions in more detail. These have been particularly influenced by the work of Robinson et al.,² which stresses how important it is that school leaders 'participate with teachers in their professional learning activities'. See Table 1 for this revised list of leadership practices.



Table 1: Leadership practices

Domains of practice	Specific leadership practices
Set directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a shared vision • Identify specific, shared, short-term goals • Create high performance expectations • Communicate the vision and goals
Build relationships and develop people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate growth in the professional capacities of staff • Provide support and demonstrate consideration for individual staff members • Model the school's values and practices • Build trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents • Establish productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives
Develop the organisation to support desired practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a collaborative culture and distribute leadership • Structure the organisation to facilitate collaboration • Build productive relationships with families and communities • Connect the school to its wider environment • Maintain a safe and healthy school environment • Allocate resources in support of the school's vision and goals
Improve the instructional programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff the instructional programme • Provide instructional support • Monitor student learning and school improvement progress • Buffer staff from distractions to their instructional work

Adapted from Leithwood, K. Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2019) Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*. 40(1) 5-22. DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077.

What is striking about this list of leadership actions is how the four key domains fit with the well-respected organisational leadership model proposed by David Pendleton and Adrian Furnham in their brilliantly intuitive *Leadership: all you need to know*.³ Based on a literature review of over 100 years of crucial research, they have synthesised leadership into three main domains, each of which overlap to give a total of six areas, as set out in Figure 1.

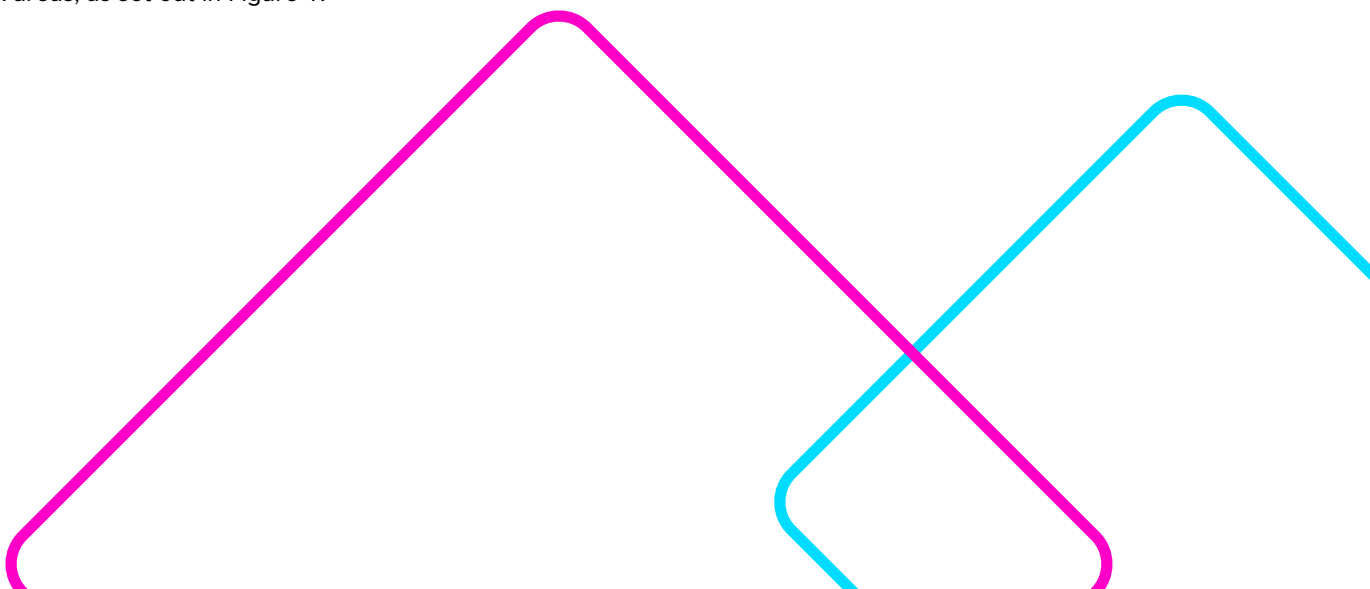
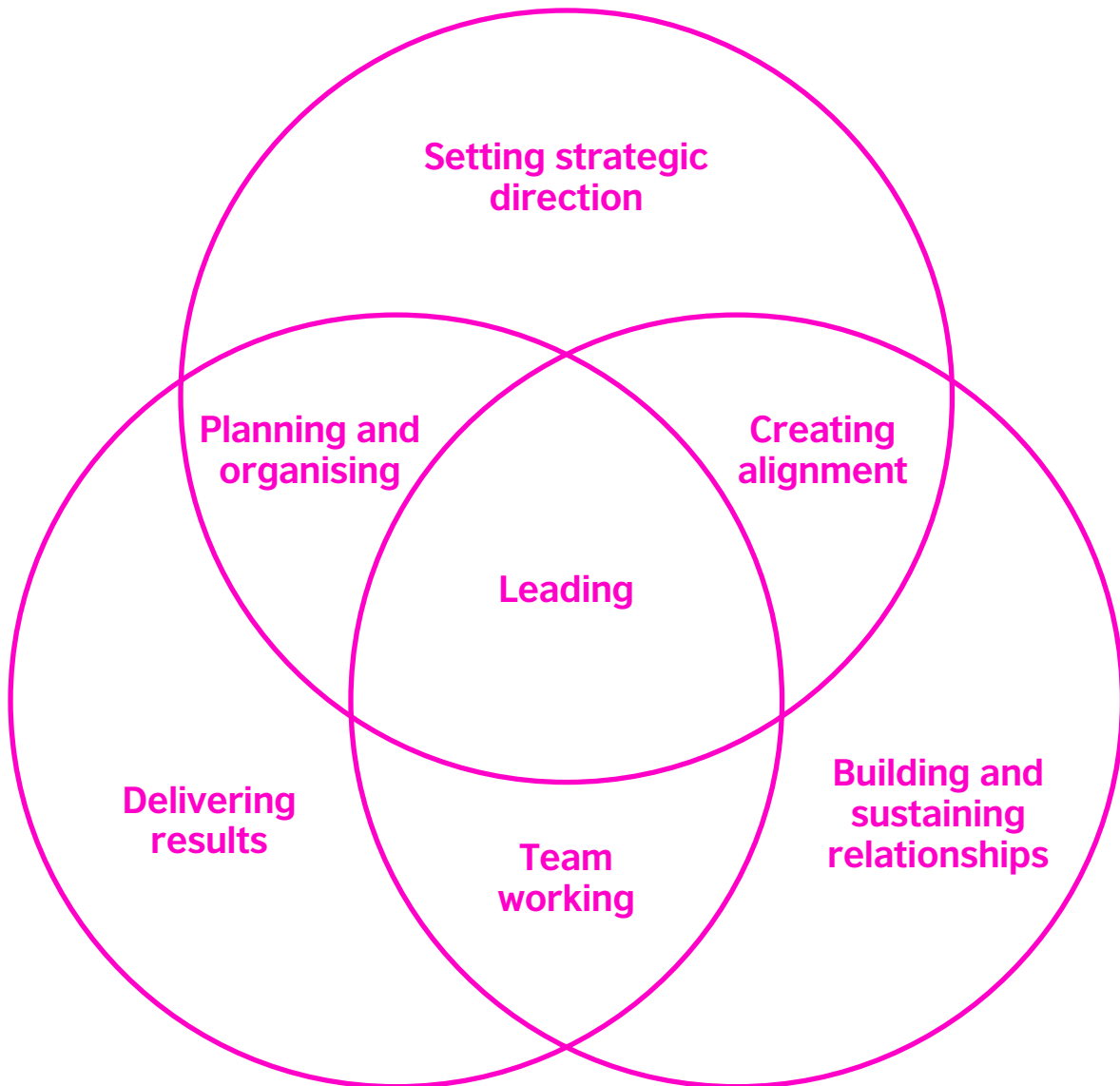
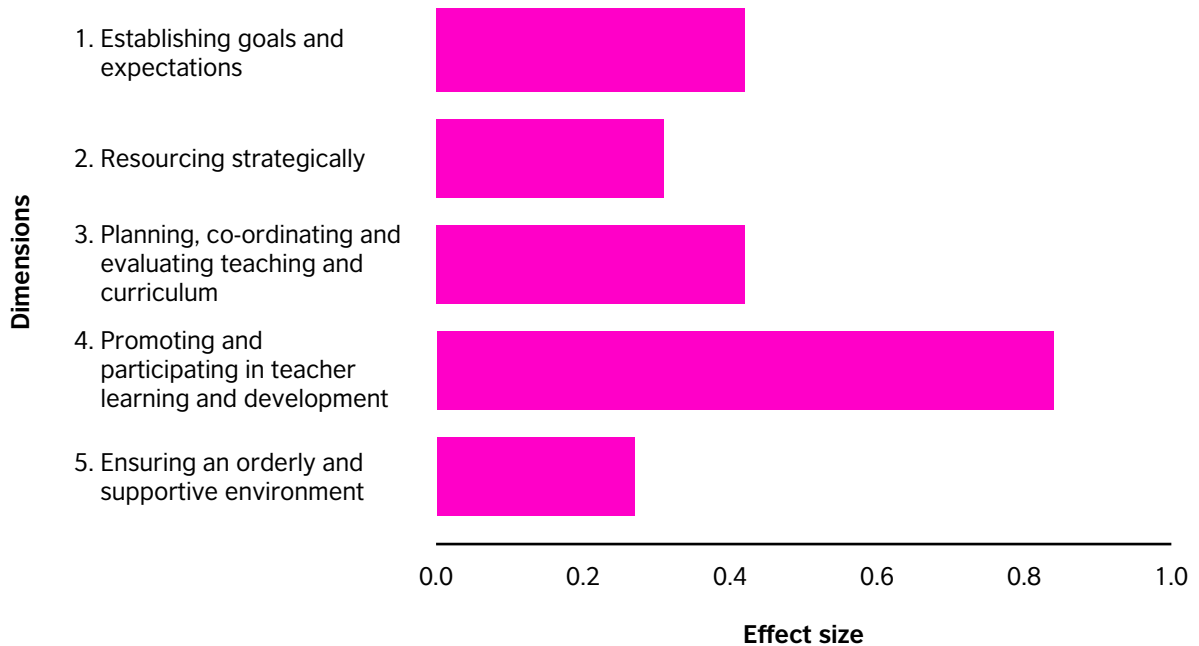


Figure 1: The three domains of leadership



Adapted from Pendleton, D. and Furnham, A. (2012). *Leadership: all you need to know*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

As well as noting how the domains relating to direction setting and relationship building are mirrored almost exactly in both models, it's interesting to note that vital elements of each also relate to *both* generic and role-specific knowledge and skills. For example, by examining three of the five most powerful dimensions identified by Robinson (see Figure 2), we see how important it is for leaders to know how to support teachers to improve their practice, to create a positive climate for learning, and to plan and evaluate teaching and curricular effectiveness. These areas all require in-depth knowledge and expertise in relation to teaching and learning, if leaders are to have an impact.

Figure 2: The five dimensions of leadership

Adapted from Robinson, V., Lloyd, C. and Rowe, K. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why; Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. The University of Auckland for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Table 2: Personal resources for effective leadership

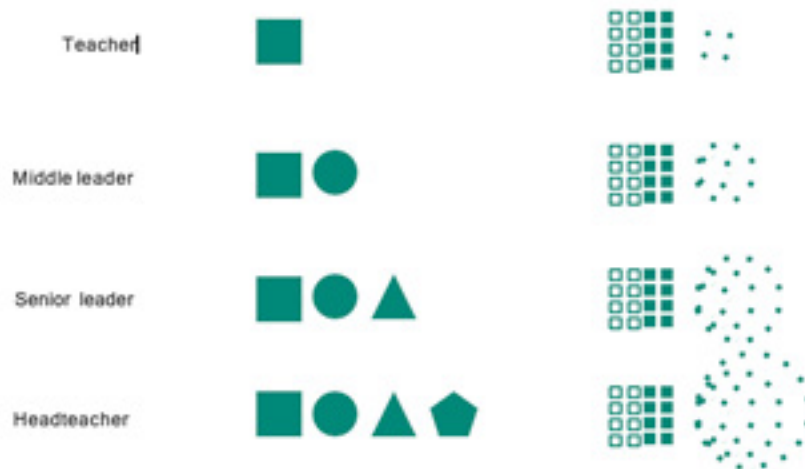
Domains of practice	Specific leadership practices
Cognitive resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving expertise • Domain-specific knowledge • Systems thinking
Social resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceiving emotions • Managing emotions • Acting in emotionally appropriate ways
Psychological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Self-efficacy • Resilience • Proactivity

Adapted from Leithwood, K. Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2019) Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*. 40(1), 5–22. DOI:10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077.

Equally, there are important elements within both models that relate to more generic leadership actions, such as, building relationships, planning, or creating buy-in.

Engaging colleagues is a fundamental part of a leader's role. You could be pursuing a great strategy, but you won't have the desired impact if your team doesn't understand the approach or care about what you are trying to improve.

Figure 3: The two realms of leadership



Personal qualities

But when it comes to the potential false dichotomy, this is only half the story. In their seventh claim, Leithwood et al.⁴ state that ‘a small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness’. In other words, there are some pivotal personal qualities, knowledge and skills that appear to underpin what effective leaders do. These are grouped into three domains: cognitive resources, social resources and psychological resources (see Table 2).

What is, once again, striking about this list of personal attributes is how it relates to both *expert knowledge*, such as the elements of domain-specific knowledge and problem-solving expertise, and more *generic personal qualities*, such as resilience, self-efficacy and proactivity. As with leadership actions, it is the powerful combination of both that, this evidence suggests, leads to the greatest impact of leadership on outcomes for pupils. Thinking of this as an either/or choice is unhelpful.

A synthesised model

Drawing both perspectives together, I would like to suggest there are, therefore, two main realms for school leadership across all levels:

1. Role-related leadership knowledge, skills and expertise.
2. Personal qualities and universal leadership skills.

As Figure 3 illustrates, there is specific leadership knowledge and role-related expertise that a teacher needs to be able to lead an effective lesson, such as effective curriculum and pedagogical expertise. This knowledge is represented by the box in Realm 1. As teachers take on more formal leadership responsibilities, there is a cumulative requirement for additional expert knowledge and skills to carry out each role effectively. These are shown by the additional shapes for increasingly senior roles. For example, headteachers will need specific knowledge in relation to budgetary and human resources issues, which a middle leader would not usually require.

But leaders at all levels also need to demonstrate a set of personal qualities, and should be able to use a range of generic leadership skills (see Realm 2). For teachers, this includes generic skills like building and sustaining relationships with students or planning and prioritising time effectively. As the scale and scope of a leadership role increases (represented by the spheres), unlike in Realm 1, there are no new personal qualities or skills. Rather, individual leaders need to apply the very same traits, but in an increasingly broader context, adapting their approach to suit their wider context or situation.

This is where David Pendleton’s model from earlier is so helpful, and why at Leadership Matters, we have placed his ‘Primary Colours’ model at the heart of our thinking about school leadership. Whether we are talking about teachers leading a lesson, or headteachers running a school (and everything in between), what matters is having the right balance between the six main elements of the model, which combine both expert role-specific knowledge and the personal qualities and generic leadership skills needed for success.

Implications for instructional leadership

Returning to Robinson's findings, and the huge importance of what essentially boils down to leaders focusing on helping teachers be better teachers, the question then is: how do school leaders actually support the quality of instruction in practice? At its simplest level, this is about prioritising time spent on observing teaching, having productive professional conversations and identifying priorities for practice and improvement. In other words, it is about offering feedback and agreeing next steps.

In his book *Leverage Leadership*, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo⁵ identifies five main areas that challenge what we often think constitutes effective feedback (see Figure 4).

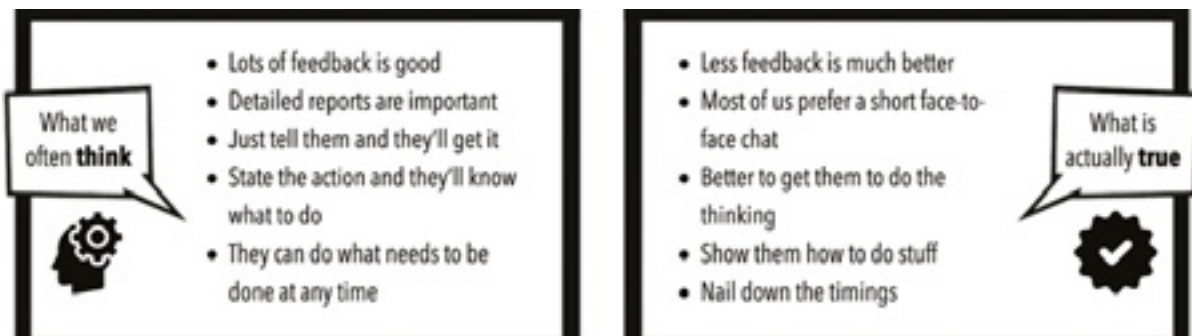
So, how can this help teachers improve?

- Less feedback helps teachers prioritise what they need to focus on. Trying to improve in too many areas at once may lead to not improving in any of them.
- While there is a place for written feedback (which the receiver can revisit), when it comes to implementing change, many people find a positive and future-focused conversation to be more useful.
- When identifying potential areas for growth, try asking teachers to reflect for themselves first, and only offer suggestions if they cannot see what you have seen.
- When it comes to working out what to do differently, don't be afraid to give advice if they need you to.
- Agree some clear timeframes about what will be achieved, and by when.

The feedback sandwich

Much has been written about how to give great feedback, and you have probably heard of the 'feedback sandwich' (see Figure 5). I am increasingly of the view that the traditional feedback sandwich may have had its day.

Figure 4: Challenging beliefs about effective feedback



Adapted from Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2012). *Leverage Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

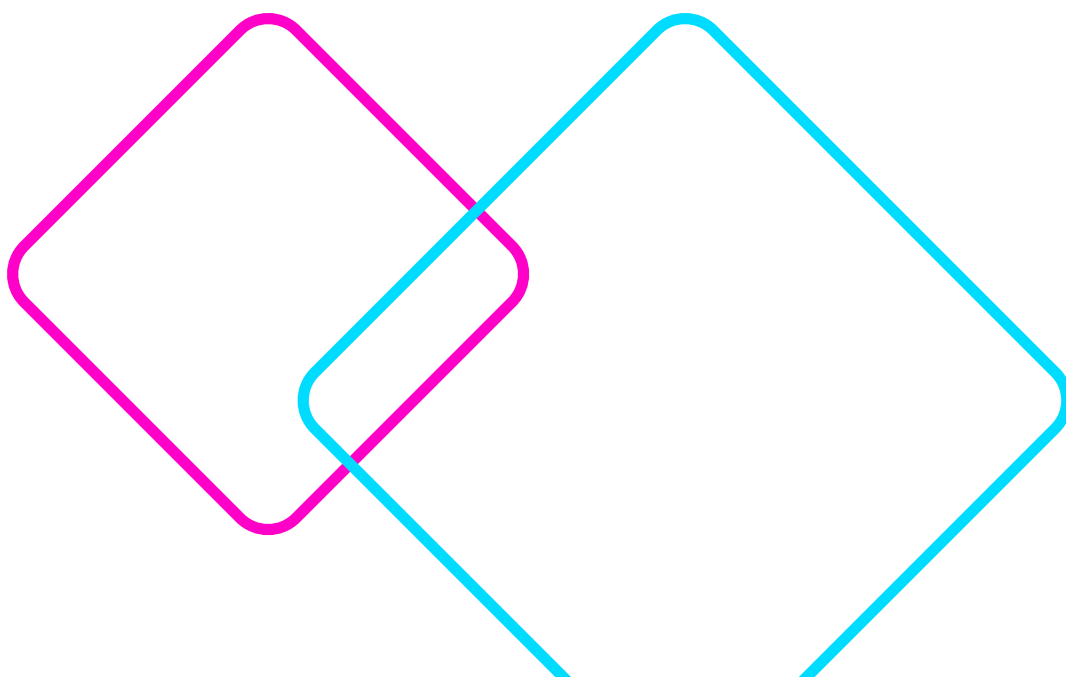


Figure 5: The feedback sandwich



Adapted from Buck, A. (2020). *The BASIC Coaching Method*. London: Cadogan Press.

The idea behind the feedback sandwich is a good one – to make sure you include some positives in your feedback. In fact, make sure there is more positive than negative, and ensure there is something to improve or develop. All of which is great. The trouble with this approach is that individuals don't really own their area for growth, even though they may well have ideas about how they can improve, which might be quite similar. Or they may not agree with what the person offering the feedback thinks. In *Leadership Matters*,⁶ I challenge this by proposing a new approach: 'feedback tennis' (see Figure 6).

Feedback tennis

With feedback tennis, you still start off with positives, and these form your **first point**. Of course, these need to be authentic – areas you thought were genuinely good.

You may also invite colleagues to come up with their own positive reflections. This approach can work for reflecting on a lesson, or on something a leader has just delivered. By focusing on the positives, you are building rapport, trust and positivity.

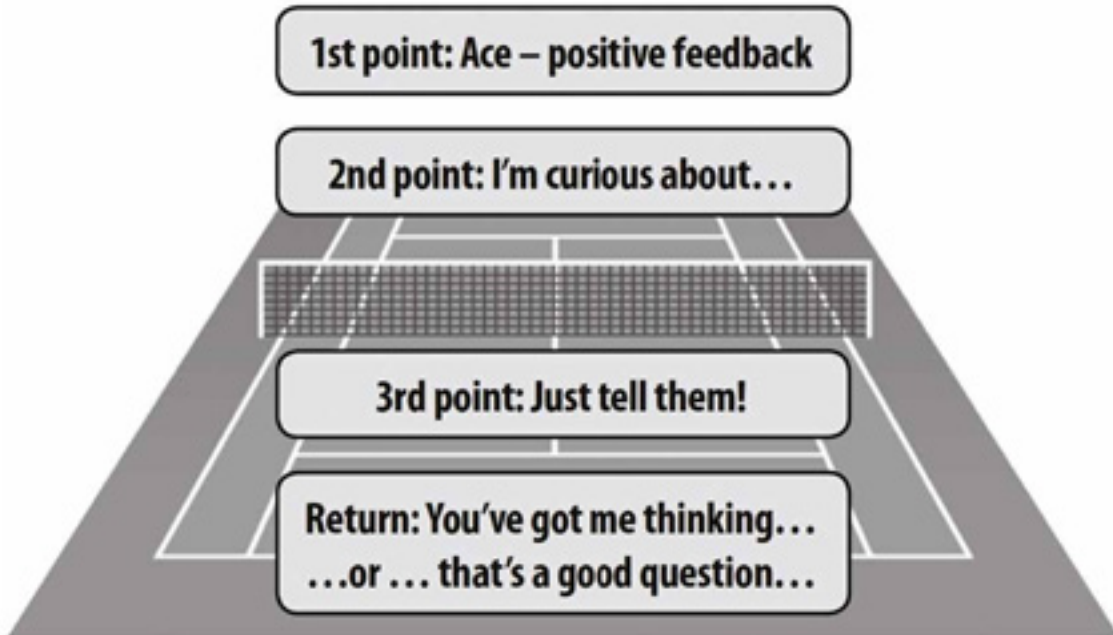
Your **second point** is to ask a neutral, or non-judgemental, question about an area where you think there may be potential for growth, and see what your colleague thinks. There may be a very good reason why they did what they did, which you weren't aware of. Or the question may get them to start reflecting in a helpful way, and they become genuinely open to thinking about ways they might improve what they did.

Such a response or **return** is what you are looking for. You have prompted colleagues to think for themselves. And, of course, unlike the feedback sandwich, which is eaten in just three bites, feedback tennis can continue back and forth as a coaching conversation until the point is made – or won!

There will, of course, be occasions when, no matter how well you ask curious questions, a colleague just can't see something for themselves. In such situations, it is absolutely appropriate for your **third point** to be that you tell them what you are thinking. The key here is to avoid falling into the trap of you making all the suggestions on the assumption that this is what your colleague needs. The more they have done the thinking for themselves, the greater the chance their practice will change for the better, and in the long term.

Feedback tennis is still a fledgling concept (and my evidence for its efficacy is effectively zero), but informal feedback from colleagues who have focused on developing this as a leadership habit have said they are finding it very useful.

Figure 6: Feedback tennis



Adapted from Buck, A. (2020). *The BASIC Coaching Method*. London: Cadogan Press.

Move from open to closed questions

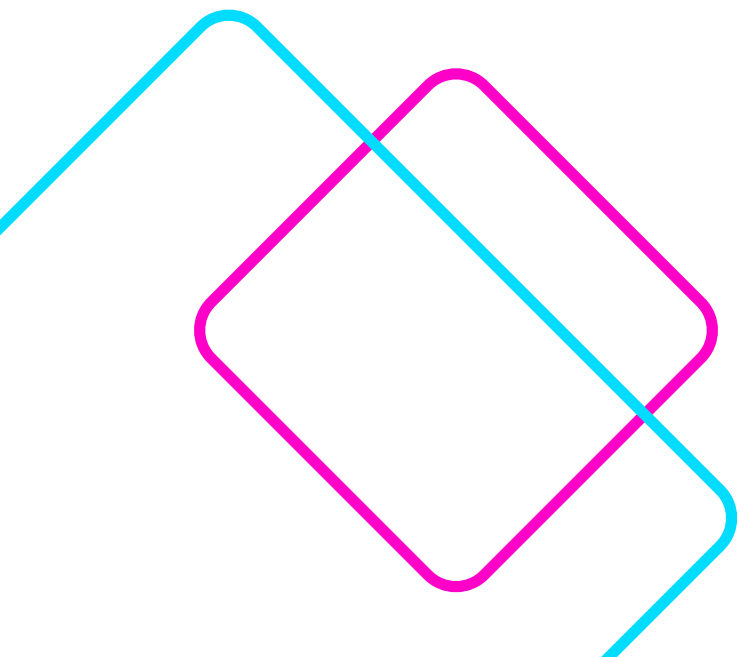
As with most coaching conversations, it is usually most useful to start with open questions that allow your coachee to explore possibilities for themselves. However, when you want them to focus on the specifics of what they want to do, or if they are having difficulty seeing what you think might be a good place to focus their attention, you may want to ask a more closed or leading question.

This is where your questions can really challenge your coachee to think hard about something, but with them being much less likely to feel threatened or defensive. For example, good open questions early on could be:

- What could you do differently next time?
- What didn't work out quite how you hoped?

Closed questions could be:

- Are you happy with what you have come up with?
- When are you going to do this?



If all else fails – just tell them

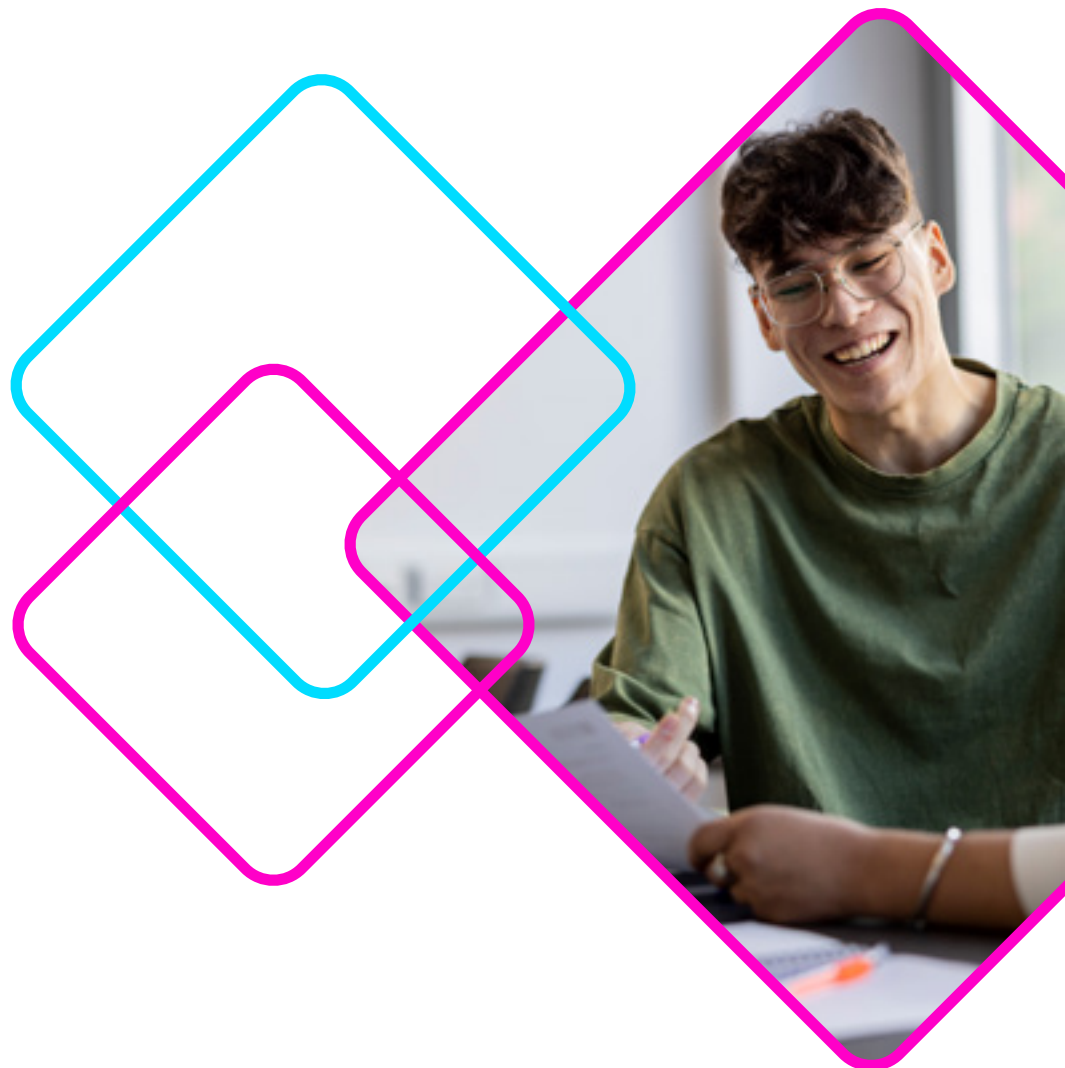
No matter how skilled you are at asking great questions, there will be times when you've exhausted all possible lines of enquiry and still someone can't see what needs to change. In these situations, you have no choice but to tell them what your own views are (at least you've given them the chance to work things out for themselves first). This then provides leaders with the platform to coach or mentor a teacher on exactly what they then need to modify in relation to their practice. Once a goal has been agreed, the focus needs to be on the sustained and deliberate practising of that particular teaching element.

This process, often referred to as 'instructional' or 'incremental' coaching, is most powerful when it is embedded into the culture of a school for all staff. Peter Matthews believes the potential of this approach is significant:

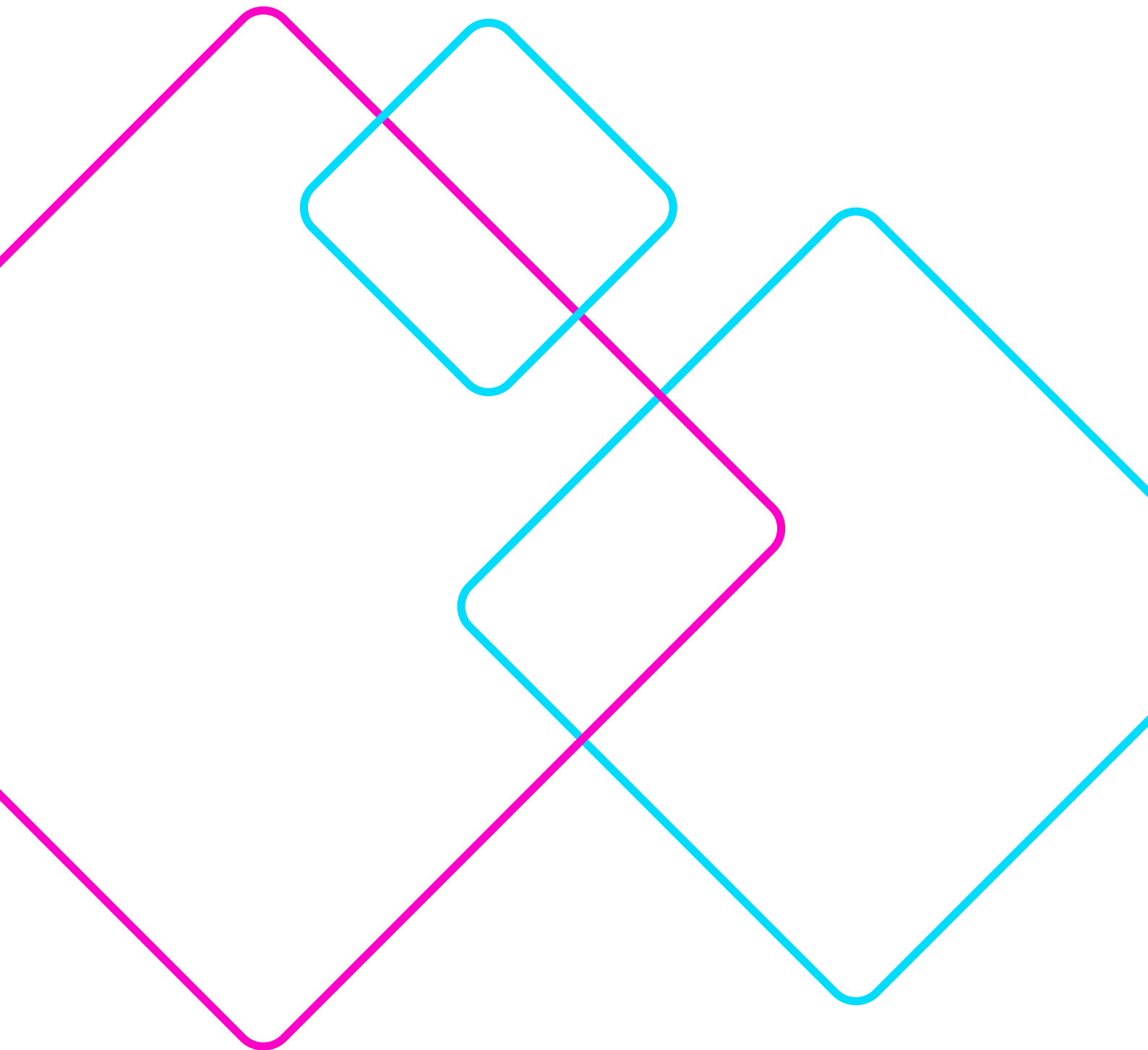
In the research carried out into incremental coaching I found that where it has been adopted by a school, incremental coaching is the core process for developing the teaching workforce; it builds on other training and is central to continuing professional development (CPD), effectively transforming continuing to continuous professional development. One further characteristic, essential to the successful establishment of incremental coaching, is that it is developmental and non-judgmental. It is best when detached from performance management; indeed, perceptions of such a link are detrimental to the process. For this reason, it is better if coaches are not the line managers of those they are coaching, and the outcomes of coaching are owned by the coachee rather than management.⁷

Matthews also notes that the way in which incremental coaching is presented is crucial, and the climate within which it is implemented makes a real difference:

The schools presented incremental coaching as an entitlement for teachers: something that will support them in their work, enhance their skills and accelerate their progress towards professional mastery. Even when this stage is reached, it remains valuable, as demonstrated by leaders in education and other organisations and in a range of occupations. Coaching has the potential to make teaching more effective, more satisfying and more successful, through its agency for professional and personal growth. Undertaken systematically across a school, it can improve instructional quality and consistency.



- 1 Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2008). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: NCSL.
- 2 Robinson, V., Lloyd, C. and Rowe, K. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why; Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. The University of Auckland for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.
- 3 Pendleton, D. and Furnham, A. (2012). *Leadership: all you need to know*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 4 Leithwood, K., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2019). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*. 40(1), 5–22. DOI:10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077.
- 5 Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2012). *Leverage leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 6 Buck, A. (2018). *Leadership Matters 3.0*. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational.
- 7 Buck, A. (2018). *Leadership Matters 3.0*. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational.



Instructional Leadership and Classroom Practice

Rebecca Picton, School Education Policy Lead, British Council, and Inku Fasil, Programme Manager, Schools, British Council.

Photograph: Ketema Disasa (left) reflects on the LL4GE training and projects at Jima Teacher Training College



Jima is a small city nestled in the lush green highlands of southern Ethiopia. Bore Primary is one of the larger primary schools in Jima, with 48 teachers and 3144 students who attend in two shifts.

Making a change

In Autumn 2023, Bore Primary School headteacher Ketema Disasa attended instructional leadership training as part of the British Council's Leading Learning for Gender Equality (LL4GE) programme. During the training he realised there were two big changes he could make to improve his school; 'Before the training I was mostly working on paperwork,' he recalled. Ketema decided he wanted to change how he worked, to spend more time actively supporting teachers in the classrooms.

The second change Ketema wanted to make was to address his school's lack of gender cohesion. In Bore Primary it was common for male and female students and staff to be separate. This separation had become a barrier, preventing students from being fully included in the life of the school.

Sharing roles

Ketema began shifting his focus from the office to the classrooms. He delegated leadership tasks to his two deputy heads, who in turn shared more roles among the teachers. 'Every teacher became involved in school leadership,' explained Ketema, 'The teachers help us, for example, with report preparations and computer activities. We are all working together now. The teachers feel good about this too.'

Ketema's attention turned next to lesson plans. 'Before the training every teacher was working independently,' he explained, 'They would just submit lesson plans, we would sign them, and we would leave them to their work. The training opened our eyes!' Ketema and his team had another look at how lesson plans were used. They began to spend more time looking carefully at the lesson plans after they had been submitted, then going to the classrooms to check how effectively they were being delivered.

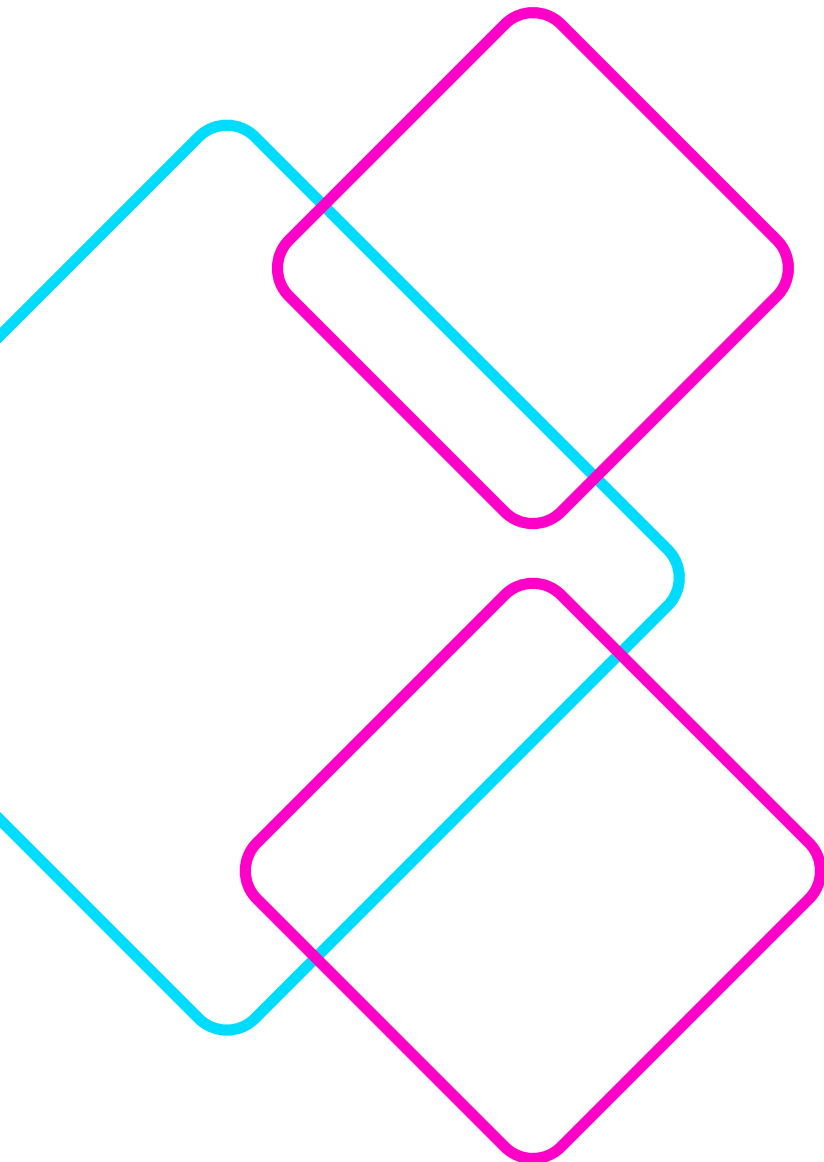
Classroom observations were transformed from stressful supervision to supportive observation through the introduction of a coaching approach. Ketema brought teachers of the same subjects together to share lesson plans and develop approaches to teaching topics in the same way. The teachers found this change very positive, and it helped them to feel more motivated. Ketema observed that, 'This helped teachers work in the best way. They are not afraid of observation and even invite us to see their progress. When they hear their strengths and areas of weakness, they are happy. This form of coaching method helps them.'

Working together

The second big change Ketema aimed for was bringing students together, making sure every student had access to every school activity. Though only a quarter of students in Bore Primary are boys, Ketema could see how they didn't mix with the female students. One of the activities where this was most visible was PE. During PE lessons girls would sit separately, watching the boys play. Students had previously seen their teachers do the same thing, separating themselves by gender, but the LL4GE training showed teachers that they can work together freely. Ketema explained, 'Then the teachers convinced the students that they could interact freely too.' The female students now play and take part in PE, just like the boys.

Before the instructional leadership training Ketema thought his days should be spent in the office having meetings. 'Before the training I was mostly working on paperwork and dealing with the community', he recalled, 'But after the training we changed a lot of things. I learned how to do classroom observations, how to help and support my teachers.' Ketema now spends his days in the classroom with teachers and students. 'Most of our school jobs are now shifted to the school environment rather than outside. Now, we spend a lot of time with our teachers rather than outside stakeholders.'

Ketema and his staff at Bore Primary now work together, in leadership and in teaching. They share, support and improve together. Inspired by this and supported by their staff, the students now learn and play together too. Where before the school was full of separation, it is now a connected community, leading, working, and learning together.



Leading learning for gender equality in Kenya

Mercy Munialo, Senior Programmes Manager, Dignitas

Background

Leading Learning for Gender Equality (LL4GE) is an innovative British Council initiative that aims to improve learning outcomes for young people in school, especially girls. It is currently being delivered across six sub-Saharan African countries and is delivered locally in Kenya by the Dignitas project. The project provides opportunities for instructional leaders to develop their expertise in addressing gender inequalities by developing the skills, strategies, tools and approaches which are useful for promoting gender-responsive pedagogy in schools.

In Kenya, the project is implemented in the counties of Homa Bay and Machakos, targeting a total of 316 instructional leaders from 158 schools. So far, the project has reached 94 per cent of school leaders (297), and 99 per cent of schools (155) through six teacher professional development workshops conducted in both counties.

Building gender equality steps: a Got Rateng story

Six months ago, Got Rateng primary school in Homa Bay county faced significant challenges due to a lack of accessible water. The school, which sits at the foot of rocky hills and a thick forest, has one river that has always been the source of water for the school and the community. However, the road to the river was considered unsafe, and some girls had been previously sexually assaulted when making the journey to collect water. In the interests of safety the school assigned boys to the task of fetching water for cooking, which they did every day in shifts. Unfortunately, this was a time-consuming role, and boys would often return late, missing valuable classroom time. As one of the teachers put it, 'It's just how things were. We knew it wasn't ideal, but we felt there was no other way.'

A transformative change began when the school became involved in the Leading Learning for Gender Equality project in January 2024. Through comprehensive training sessions, capacity-building and mentorship sessions, the school's leaders gained new insights and perspectives on addressing gender inequalities. Key among the sessions was information about how to collect data and then analyse and triangulate it to find root causes of poor learning outcomes for boys and girls. This proved to be key in terms of supporting leaders to identify issues and plan solutions to improve provision.

Inspired by the LL4GE project's principles, the school leadership led by Mr Philip Okwanyi and Mrs Emily, recognised the need for a collaborative approach to tackling the issue of boys missing school because of the time they spent fetching water. One of the most impactful sessions focused on collecting and analysing data to understand learning outcomes. 'We started tracking the time lost each day,' said Mrs. Emily, 'We discovered that on average, five boys would miss seven to ten minutes of class every time they went to fetch water to cook meals for the school. That's over an hour of lost learning every week; time they couldn't afford to lose.'

Armed with this data, Mr Okwanyi and Mrs. Emily knew they had to act but realised they couldn't do it alone. They presented their findings to the school board, showing how the current system was not only perpetuating gender inequality but also hindering the boys' education. 'We didn't just want a quick fix,' Mr Okwanyi explained, 'We wanted a solution that would benefit everyone, boys and girls alike.' The school board found value in the project's activities and together, supported them to build a school well. The successful completion of the borehole came with almost instant results, reducing lost lesson time as the boys – and girls – could easily fetch water in just a few minutes during break time.

Both boys and girls could now share the responsibility of collecting water, promoting equality and challenging long-held stereotypes. This significant shift meant that all students could fully participate in their education without the interruption of gender-based tasks. The school has now become a beacon of progress, showcasing how targeted interventions and a commitment to gender equality can lead to profound changes.

The borehole project and its impact exemplify the power of community-driven solutions and inclusive leadership. By addressing the root causes of gender inequality, the school has created an environment where every student, regardless of their gender, can thrive academically and socially.

Through the LL4GE project, Got Rateng Primary school has now transformed not only its approach to water access but also its school culture. This story of change serves as an inspiring example of how gender equality can be achieved through thoughtful, collective action, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all students. It also highlights how instructional leaders who have focused on analysing data in order to identify issues can be empowered to develop innovative solutions.



Leadership in action: enhancing inclusion and academic performance for disabled students in Menofiya governorate, Egypt

Eman Amer, Psychological Researcher, and Shaimaa El Banna, Director of Education, British Council Egypt

There is a growing interest and urgent need to develop policies that ensure equality for people with disabilities in Egyptian society. Reflecting this, Egypt has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹ and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).² To establish a legal framework for inclusive education, Ministerial Decree 252 (2017)³ and Law No. 10/2018⁴ mandate that all public and community schools include students with mild disabilities, while specialised schools cater for students with severe learning disabilities. Article 11 of Law No. 10 prohibits schools from denying admission to eligible students based on disability.

There is a shared commitment by the British Council and Egypt's Ministry of Education to uphold the inclusion of children and youth with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream education as a fundamental human right, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, or medical condition. As part of this partnership, the British Council conducted workshops on inclusive pedagogies within a continuous professional development (CPD) initiative, providing comprehensive educational training for MOE school principals and chief educational officers. The aim was to build inclusive education capacities and raise awareness of the concept of inclusion for children with SEND, as well as the associated issues. Focusing on practical classroom strategies, over 100 trainees benefited from this CPD across Menofiya and Qaliyobia governorates.

This case study focuses on Dr Hala, the Chief Educational Officer for primary grades in Menofiya governorate. She supervises 1,026 schools, which educate 1,615 SEND students in the first three grades. Initially opposed to inclusive schools, her perspective changed after attending the British Council training. She then initiated a pilot phase to train educational officers in SEND inclusion, with five administrations and 31 officers participating, marking the start of broader knowledge dissemination.

The second phase of the project aimed to improve education quality for SEND students in nine schools using inclusive pedagogy. One student from each school, with conditions including ADHD, mild autism, and Down's syndrome, underwent a pre-assessment and received a personalised 12-week plan to enhance skills in Arabic reading, writing, and mathematics. Dedicated teams, including class teachers, psychologists, educational officers, principals, and general managers, were trained on inclusive pedagogies to support these students. This phase increased the total number of trained personnel to 138.

This project was designed to address several barriers hindering the inclusion of SEND students in public schools, such as lack of awareness and insufficient pedagogical tools. However, upon its launch, the project encountered additional challenges:

- **Staff shortages:** many schools lacked sufficient personnel to dedicate efforts specifically to students with SEND.
- **Resource limitations:** variations in funding and resources among different types of schools hindered their ability to organise extracurricular activities. Additionally, high student-to-teacher ratios sometimes made it difficult for teachers to give special attention to students with SEND.
- **Resistance to change:** some staff members were resistant to the new culture and practices introduced by the project.

Despite challenges, the inclusion teams met their objectives with students. A key aspect of the second phase was involving parents and the community. Dr Hala and her team engaged with parents, explaining the project's goals and benefits. In the third, monitoring phase, students were reassessed weekly or bi-weekly. Teachers provided one-on-one sessions to address high student-to-teacher ratios, ensuring effective mentoring. Enthusiastic team dynamics and close monitoring reduced resistance and criticism. This initiative sparked curiosity among other staff members, encouraging them to explore the new approach.

The outcomes for the students were truly remarkable. They achieved significant academic improvements, with Arabic language scores increasing from 40 per cent to 60 per cent and maths scores rising from 30 per cent to 50 per cent. More importantly, the project addressed the social isolation that students with SEND often face. Over the 12 weeks, the dedicated attention and support instilled confidence in these students, profoundly enhancing their ability to communicate and engage with peers. Students who initially lacked social connections emerged socially connected and actively participating in group activities such as arts, music and sports. This transformation is as important as their academic progress, if not more so.

Dr Hala demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and qualities throughout this initiative. Her ability to empathise and adapt her perspective was crucial in driving the project's success. She exhibited strong communication skills, effectively engaging with diverse stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and government officials. Her strategic vision and dedication to inclusive education motivated her team and created a supportive environment that fostered innovation and collaboration. Dr Hala's leadership not only transformed the educational landscape for SEND students in Menofiya but also set a precedent for inclusive education practices across Egypt.

This initiative demonstrates the critical importance of community involvement and leadership. Menofiya now boasts over 100 educators from diverse disciplines and educational hierarchies who are equipped with the essentials of inclusive education. A palpable sense of community has blossomed among parents, teachers, psychologists, principals, and both SEND and non-SEND students, forming a solid foundation for future collaboration. In just 12 weeks, the project yielded tangible improvements in both academic performance and social integration for nine students with SEND. Driven by shared passion, collaboration, empathy, and a sense of duty, this burgeoning movement is poised to transform educational practices in Menofiya and potentially across Egypt.

- 1 United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=_en
- 2 United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=_en
- 3 Ministry of Education (2021). *International Day of People with Special Needs Efforts of the Ministry of Education in the field of educational integration in Egyptian schools within the framework of the education system (2.0)*. Available at: <https://moe.gov.eg/en/what-s-on/news/international-day-of-people-with-special-needs>
- 4 Arab Republic of Egypt (2018). *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Law No. 10 of 2018. Available at: <https://ncw.gov.eg/Images/PdfRelease/Law%20No%2010%20of%202018%20For%20Rights%20o-122020403910677.pdf>



Transforming education through inclusive leadership: the impact of the Language for Resilience Project in Adjumani, Uganda

Margaret Atim, Project Manager, Schools, British Council Uganda

As refugee hosting countries around the world increasingly adopt a model of refugee inclusion in national education systems, policy actors and educators must grapple with the linguistic implications of this inclusion; which languages should refugee learners use at school? How and when? Toward what ends? The question of language in education is a practical one, as it is language which enables access to opportunities for learning, grade progression, and certification. It is also deeply personal, tied together with family, identity, culture, and tradition. It is a source of connection and shared history, but it is also political; a flashpoint for conflict, and a symbol of who is seen to belong and who is not.¹

Uganda is one of the largest refugee-hosting nations in the world. By the end of June 2023, the country was host to 1,561,634 refugees and asylum seekers, and new arrivals have continued to arrive, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan.² Uganda has progressive policies on the rights of education for refugees, as shown by the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (ERP) which aims to strengthen access to, and the quality of, education, and develop the education system's capacity to respond to the refugee education crisis. While these laws contribute to a creating a favourable environment in which refugees can flourish, the challenge presented by the question of what language should be used as the language of instruction cannot be ignored.

The Language for Reliance Programme – created and run by the British Council and under the guidance of a taskforce created by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) – conducted a study on refugee education in response to the large influx of refugees into Uganda. The first study looked specifically at the impact the influx had on language policy and language use in the classroom and provided a description of the status quo; the key problems of overcrowding and of learners and teachers frequently having no language in common.³ The second study⁴ looked at how teachers and schools were adapting to and coping with the situation. It set out to look for examples of effective practice within schools and attempted to describe potentially successful efforts to address the enormous practical challenges that resulted from having such a linguistically diverse population of learners entering the education system, with a view to them being adopted elsewhere. Using their extensive experience from the Connecting Classrooms programme, the team developed training to support teachers and school leaders in refugee hosting schools to implement effective practices to enable learning in multilingual classrooms.



Louis Mure, a primary school leader at Alere II Primary School, Adjumani, has significantly improved his school leadership methods following the British Council's Language for Resilience (L4R) training in December 2021. With seventeen years of experience managing schools in a refugee settlement, he's faced many challenges. The linguistic diversity among students, speaking Dinka, Nuer, and Madi, created a substantial communication gap with teachers, who were primarily Madi speakers. This gap made effective teaching and learning nearly impossible, and the adopted language of instruction – English – was also unfamiliar to many students.

Additionally, the influx of new arrivals with varied educational backgrounds posed difficulties in class placement, which was mostly based on English proficiency, further complicating the educational process. The prevalent teacher-centred approach, focused on rapid syllabus coverage, resulted in high dropout rates and disengagement among students. Overcrowding, coupled with inadequate learning materials, further hindered the educational experience, leaving many students behind.

After training, Louis learned Nuer and encouraged his teachers to learn the languages spoken by their students to improve communication. Assemblies began to incorporate familiar languages alongside English, making them more inclusive for all students.

He actively engaged with parents, and revitalised the parent-teacher association to solicit their support in returning children to school and reducing dropout levels, particularly among children who had left due to language barriers.

One of the key successes was the return of five girls who had dropped out as a result of the language barrier but also got pregnant during the lockdown. With the joint efforts of parents, the PTA and the school, Louis got these girls back to class, with two of them sitting their primary leaving exams last year.

An English club has also been formed to support the learning of English. The club's success was evident when students excelled in interschool competitions, winning awards and boosting their confidence and motivation. Louis' initiative in learning students' languages has also helped create a more inclusive school environment where students and teachers feel more comfortable and are more eager to participate.

Louis' experience illustrates the tangible benefits of adapting school leadership methods to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The skills he gained from the British Council's L4R training have enabled him to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, leading to better student outcomes. His story highlights the importance of language and cultural sensitivity in education, particularly in challenging settings like refugee settlements.

- 1 Reddick, C. and Chopra, V. (2021). Language considerations in refugee education: languages for opportunity, connection, and roots. *Language and Education*, 37(2), 244–261.
- 2 UNHCR (2023). *Uganda factsheet*. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/unhcr-uganda-factsheet-june-2023?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwo0q3Bh-B3EiwAYqYoEtm6nkQL8OZfkByHls9goVluV9tizD9zV_xu4GdbJSbYUOnSrwZWRoCzflQAyD_BwE
- 3 Hicks, R. and Maina, L. (2018). *The impact of refugees on schools in Uganda*. London: British Council.
- 4 Hicks, R. and Maina, L. (2021) *Language use in refugee-impacted schools in Uganda*. London: British Council



A great school is necessary but not sufficient: how a place-based, cradle to career approach to community development work is helping to transform outcomes for babies, children and young people in the UK.

Mei Lim, Executive Director, Reach Foundation and Rebecca Cramer, co-founder and CEO of Reach Schools

Reach Academy Feltham was founded in 2012 to educate children aged 2–18 in Feltham, an underserved area in West London, UK, where babies, children and young people are more likely to achieve poorer outcomes than their socio-economically advantaged peers across a range of indicators. The school's vision is to ensure that every child can enjoy a life of choice and opportunity. It was rated as 'Outstanding' by England's quality assurance inspectorate in 2014 and has achieved consistently high academic outcomes year-on-year, with a second Reach school opening in September 2024.

Relationships, families and community have always been at the heart of the school's systems and policies, but our experience has led us to the realisation that a good school is necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure every child can achieve the four outcomes we believe are fundamental for enjoying a life of choice and opportunity:

- Being healthy.
- Being safe and well supported.
- Achieving good academic outcomes.
- Having strong relationships and networks.

This is because we know schools don't exist, and can't operate, in a vacuum, just as children don't grow up in a vacuum. They grow up in a place – a community – where they are surrounded by, and part of, a complex system of individuals, institutions and policies, which all interact over time to influence a child's development and their life chances. Our response has been to create an innovative place-based, cradle-to-career model of support for babies, children, young people and their families in Feltham.

The Reach Foundation is the charitable sister organisation to Reach Schools, set up to provide services in the community that can support children and families from cradle to career (C2C). For example, the first 1001 days from pregnancy to when a child is two years old are critical for early brain development and can influence lifelong outcomes, so the Foundation developed a model to support parents and infants up to two years, including pregnancy groups, targeted one-to-one support, and peer networks, which is now integrated into the Local Authority's Family Hub offer.

While the direct delivery of support and interventions is critical, the barriers facing young people in Feltham are deep-rooted and interlinked, and require a collective response to achieve transformational system change. This is why in 2020 the Foundation established the Feltham Convening Partnership (FCP), a collective impact initiative to improve outcomes for babies, children and young people across the community. Currently, the FCP supports over 100 local community actors, who represent 33 institutions across nine different sectors, to develop strong professional relationships and co-ordinate resources. Partners range from schools and Early Years providers to local universities, employers and local government departments and, of course, young people and parents. FCP stakeholders have collectively identified a number of shared priority areas and convene as working groups to take action; improving mental health and wellbeing support, post-16 opportunities, and Early Years and SEND provision.

This collaborative approach is also one of the main reasons behind Reach becoming a member of Citizens UK, the UK's biggest, most diverse, and most effective people-powered alliance, in 2019. Citizens UK's training and method of broad-based community organising has helped the Foundation strengthen and define its institutional values and behaviours, deeply embedding principles of organising such as 'putting people before programmes' and 'don't do for others what they can do for themselves.' Community organising has also helped to shape the Foundation's work with parents and young people, by training more leaders to carry out listening campaigns and take action. For example:

- Parents and students ran a successful listening campaign focused on improving an unsafe passageway near the local train station, which resulted in a grant from the Local Authority to fund improvements by South Western Railway and an art installation by Feltham Arts Association.
- FCP Young Researchers listened to 350 young people to find out what was impacting their mental health and wellbeing and presented their findings in different forums to local councillors.
- Reach Citizens (an after-school club for pupils) is leading a long-running community campaign for an OnSide Youth Zone in Feltham.

Reach Schools and the Reach Foundation have always focused on rigorously evaluating our work and seeking to share our learnings and insights widely, actively cultivating a spirit of systems generosity. In the past three years, the Foundation has formally codified many of these learnings about school leadership and the role of schools as anchor institutions within their community. We do this in two specific ways:

1. Cradle to career partnership

We work with 40 different school trusts in England, helping them to design, develop and deliver their own cradle to career models of support in their local communities. Collectively, these trusts directly educate more than 60,000 children every year.

2. X100 Leadership programmes

We are building the individual capacity to lead these C2C models through a series of place-based school and trust leadership programmes, and by 2030 will have trained 100 aspiring leaders in four regions across England. Part personalised development programme, part collective impact programme, it ensures these leaders are locally rooted but nationally connected.

From a single school in a corner of West London to a national movement, Reach is on a mission to ensure all babies, children and young people can grow up in thriving communities, where they attend local schools led by passionate leaders who are highly motivated to make a difference, and who understand the powerful, unique position of schools to lead a joined-up system of support at the heart of their communities.



Enhancing teaching practices at Government Junior Model Girls High School, Chungi No. 6, Multan, Pakistan

Zahida Batool, Deputy Director of Planning and Co-ordination, Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development, Government of Punjab

Context and issue

Government Junior Model Girls High School Chungi No. 6 in Multan faced significant challenges in meeting the diverse needs of its student population. Pakistan's education system, particularly in rural and underdeveloped urban areas, often struggles with resource constraints, lack of trained teachers, and high dropout rates. According to UNICEF, about 22.8 million children aged 5-16 are out of school in Pakistan, with a significant proportion being girls. In Multan specifically, the dropout rate for girls in secondary education is alarmingly high, with nearly 30 per cent leaving school before completing their studies. Recognising the need to improve teaching practices and support diverse learners, the school leadership of Chungi No. 6 Junior Model Girls High School aimed to create an inclusive and effective learning environment. The goal was to enhance instructional methods, foster collaboration among teachers, and ultimately improve student engagement and retention. This initiative was part of the British Council's Schools Connect programme and was led by the school headteacher following their participation in the British Council Instructional Leadership training.

Through the instructional leadership training the headteacher realised the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment that respects and accommodates the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs. The training introduced her to various instructional methods, such as microteaching and activity-based learning. She learned the value of fostering collaboration among teachers to share best practice, support each other, and continuously improve their instructional skills.

As a result, she employed all these skills through her planned activities and generated evidence of achievement.

What happened

The school implemented several innovative strategies to address the challenges:

1. **Microteaching technique:** teachers received support and guidance to implement microteaching. This method allowed them to refine their instructional techniques by breaking down lessons into smaller segments, practicing, and receiving feedback, thereby catering to diverse learner needs more effectively.
2. **Activity-based lesson plans:** lesson plans were redesigned to incorporate more activity-based learning approaches. These plans removed barriers to conceptual learning and embraced the needs of diverse learners, making education more engaging and accessible.
3. **E-learning simulations:** the use of e-learning simulations helped students clarify scientific concepts. These digital tools provided interactive and immersive experiences, leading to a deeper understanding and practical application of scientific principles.
4. **Low-cost, no-cost projects:** students participated in hands-on projects using affordable materials to creatively apply scientific concepts. These projects fostered innovation and entrepreneurship, allowing students to explore scientific ideas without the constraint of high costs.

5. Inclusive education practices: both teachers and students were trained to respect and value every child, including those with special needs. Activities were adapted to accommodate various learning styles, ensuring all students could participate and contribute meaningfully.
6. Assessment for inclusivity: assessments were redesigned to be inclusive, allowing students with special needs to demonstrate their knowledge and skills alongside their peers. This approach fostered a sense of belonging and value among all students.

Impact

The implementation of these strategies led to notable improvements in the school's educational environment:

1. Development of critical thinking skills: students exhibited enhanced critical thinking abilities by applying conceptual learning to real-life situations. Projects like the drip irrigation system and Newton's cradle encouraged practical problem-solving and innovation.
2. Promotion of collaborative learning: the emphasis on joint projects fostered a culture of collaboration among students. These activities promoted teamwork and collective problem solving; essential skills for future success.
3. Inclusive environment: the school successfully created an inclusive environment where all students, including those with special needs, felt valued and actively engaged in classroom activities. This inclusive approach reduced the dropout rate and increased overall student satisfaction and retention.
4. Enhanced teacher skills: teachers developed their instructional skills and learned to adapt their methods to meet the diverse needs of students. Professional growth was evident as teachers collaborated and shared best practices, leading to a more cohesive and effective teaching staff.
5. Future plans: building on the success of these initiatives, the school plans to continue using e-learning and activity-based learning approaches. The focus will be on further enhancing the learning experience and removing barriers for differently abled students, making the school even more child friendly.

Through innovative instructional strategies, inclusive education practices, and collaborative efforts, Government Junior Model Girls High School Chungi No. 6 in Multan enriched its curriculum and created a thriving, inclusive learning environment. By prioritising the diverse needs of students and fostering a culture of respect and collaboration, the school laid a strong foundation for future growth and success. This project exemplifies the positive impact of the British Council Schools Connect Programme and the benefits of instructional leadership training.



Contributors

Susan Douglas CBE

Senior Adviser, Schools, British Council
Chief Executive Officer, The Eden Academy Trust

Since leaving school headship in 2006, Susan has held a number of key roles with a variety of national and international organisations. She currently shares her time between the Eden Academy Trust and the British Council. She holds an MBA (Distinction) in Educational Leadership from the University of Buckinghamshire.

In her position as Senior Adviser at the British Council, Susan provides sector expertise and advice to a wide number of educational programmes involving ministries of education, school leaders and teachers across approximately 40 countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. She has particular interest in school leadership, professional development, and inclusion.

As CEO of the Eden Academy Trust, Susan is responsible for its strategic vision and direction. The Trust comprises 10 schools and settings in West London and the North of England, all of which have been judged as good or outstanding. Susan was instrumental in the founding and development of the Trust which provides education for children aged 3-19 with a range of complex needs.

Susan is a Trustee of the National Federation of Educational Research (NFER) and the Confederation of School Trusts (CST). She was appointed a CBE for Services to Education in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2021.

Professor Josiah Olusegun Ajiboye

Professor Josiah Olusegun Ajiboye is resident at the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. He holds a master's degree in Curriculum Studies/Social Studies Education and a doctorate in Social Studies Education. He is the current President of the African Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities, and represents Nigeria as the Nodal Officer on the UNESCO Task Force on Teachers. He has also been recently appointed as a member of the Governing Council of the newly established Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo.

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali is the Senior Education Manager for the British Council's Schools Connect programme in Pakistan, providing technical support and driving capacity development and policy reform. He is a specialist in transformative leadership in the education sector, with experience of managing large scale projects across primary, secondary and higher education settings. He is adept at cultivating and facilitating strategic alliances to bring fresh perspectives to ministries and educational institutions, and has a particular interest in cultural diversity and inclusion.

Eman Amer

Eman Amer is a psychological researcher and science communicator with a Master of Science in Psychology. She specialises in social identity, political psychology, and child psychology, combining her deep academic knowledge with a passion for making science accessible to a broader audience. Eman excels in interdisciplinary roles, using her expertise in scientific methodology alongside her skills in critical evaluation, writing, editing, and public speaking.

Eman's work is driven by a commitment to bridging the gap between complex psychological concepts and the public, ensuring that important scientific insights are communicated clearly and effectively. Her background in psychology, coupled with her talent for science communication, positions her uniquely to contribute to roles that require both rigorous research skills and the ability to engage diverse audiences.

Eager to continue exploring opportunities that blend her academic background with her communication abilities, Eman is dedicated to advancing the understanding of psychological science in various contexts.

Margaret Atim

Margaret is the Programme Manager, Schools, at the British Council Uganda. She is a lawyer by training, but a teacher at heart, and for 12 years has successfully delivered programmes in education, access to justice, economic empowerment and inclusion. Margaret has fostered relationships with Ministries of Education, Gender and Social Development, Justice, and Law and Order, and drawn education expertise from around the world to enrich programmes in Uganda. She is passionate about contributing toward empowering and building the capacity of communities to become globally competitive, resilient, and self-sustaining through relevant interventions which strengthen education and peace building.

Denise Barrows

Denise Barrows is the UK Director of BTS Spark, the not-for-profit education practice of BTS, a global leadership development consultancy providing school leaders with access to world-class coaching and leadership development. To date BTS Spark has worked with over 22,000 school leaders worldwide.

Denise has over 30 years' experience of leading far-reaching education and social impact programmes and organisations, including designing and delivering a range of services and programmes for the education sector at local, regional, national and international levels. She has previously worked in educational philanthropy, including eight years as Head of Education and Learning for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and time as a consultant and advisor to other grant-making foundations in the education and human rights fields.

Zahida Batool

Zahida Batool is the Deputy Director of Planning and Co-ordination at the Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development, Government of Punjab. A dynamic and dedicated education professional with an extensive background in both public and private education sectors, Zahida has established herself as a leading advocate for teacher development and quality education.

In her current role, Zahida is instrumental in driving initiatives aimed at enhancing the professional development of educators across the province. Her visionary leadership is evident in her contributions as a teacher, trainer, and material developer, where she has consistently championed the cause of sustainable development within education. As a validated trainer, Zahida has played a pivotal role in empowering educators with the skills and knowledge they need to excel, ensuring that quality education is delivered for students at all levels.

Marie-Claire Bretherton

Marie-Claire started her career as a teacher in Lincoln, before becoming a successful primary headteacher, leading three very different schools to secure improved outcomes for pupils. In 2012, she worked with a group of school leaders in Lincolnshire to establish KYRA, a collaborative community for teaching, leadership, research, and school improvement. Her leadership was instrumental in developing this thriving community of schools over a ten year period. She served as Education Director in a large cross-phase trust, before taking up her current position as Deputy CEO in Waterton Academy Trust. Her first book, co-authored with Steve Munby, *Imperfect Leadership in Action – A practical book for school leaders who know they don't know it all*, was published in 2022.

Andy Buck

Andy is an author, speaker, creator of the BASIC coaching model and founder of Cadogan Press.

A geography teacher by trade, Andy went on to become a headteacher for thirteen years in east London, where his school was judged outstanding in all categories and Andy was designated a National Leader of Education. In 2009 he became a Director at the National College for School Leadership, leading on the London Challenge programme. He was subsequently responsible for setting up the government's flagship Teaching Schools programme before being appointed as Managing Director at United Learning, one of the country's largest academy groups.

In 2014, Andy founded Leadership Matters, which aims to improve educational outcomes for pupils by supporting great leadership development. Andy has written seven leadership and coaching books.

Rebecca Cramer

Rebecca Cramer is the co-founder and CEO of Reach Schools, a small trust of two all-through schools in Feltham, West London. After graduating from the University of Bristol, she trained as a secondary school geography teacher with Teach First and has been working in London schools ever since. She has travelled extensively looking at education systems across the world, including those in Sweden, Singapore and the United States. Rebecca is also a co-founder and trustee of SHiFT, a charity which breaks the cycle of offending behaviours in young people by providing them with an intensive 18-month relationship with a guide; moving them from a place of vulnerability to one of strength. She was the founding co-chair of the Teach First Headteachers' Network 'Heads Forward' and in 2018 was a top 50 finalist for the Global Teacher Prize.

Dr Jane Doughty, CBE

Jane is an independent consultant who has worked with a range of clients both in the UK and internationally. She is currently working with school leaders and other education specialists from Pakistan on national government school reform projects, having recently undertaken similar work in Algeria, Lithuania and Nigeria. Jane's background is in secondary education, where she worked in schools for 20 years, including ten years as a headteacher. Between 2001 and 2013 she was a Director at the National College for School Leadership in England. Her responsibilities focused on developing and building school leadership capacity to address school improvement priorities and improve pupil outcomes. She also led a number of initiatives for the Department for Education. Jane was appointed a CBE in the 2014 New Year's Honours list for services to education.

Hilda El Khoury

Hilda El Khoury is the Director of the Directorate of Guidance and Pedagogical Counselling in Schools (DOPS) at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The remit of DOPS includes educational strategy and policy making and overseeing the promotion of quality education in public schools. Ms El Khoury was previously the Head of the Official Exams Directorate at MEHE for three years. She achieved the digitalisation of the official exams system and the accommodation of the official exams to the needs of learners with disabilities. She also established the Child Protection Unit and led the development, launch and roll-out of the Child Protection Policy. She manages the inclusive education project in public schools and was instrumental in the development of the National Policy for Inclusive Education.

Ms El Khoury is a trained maths teacher, holds a Master's degree in Education, and is currently finalising her PhD in the Science of Education.

Jane English

Jane has been an international school leadership consultant for over 12 years, working mostly on behalf of the British Council delivering training to school leaders, trainers, teachers and working alongside policy makers in a number of different countries. She was formerly principal of a large secondary school in the Southwest of England for 19 years, and CEO of a multi-academy trust, as well as working with the local authority on developing and improving school leadership.

Jane has undertaken projects on behalf of the British Council which have involved supporting school leaders in implementing major curriculum reform in Botswana, Croatia and Lithuanian. Over the past 12 months her focus has been on the introduction and co-creation of headteacher standards in Nigeria and Pakistan using experience gained from similar work undertaken in Algeria and developing a training programme for school governance in Pakistan.

Jane holds an MBA in International School Leadership and was awarded the Pearson Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in education.

Marina Gautier

Marina Gautier is Head of Policy and Insight for English and School Education at the British Council, leading on the organisation's approach to engagement with policy makers in school education. She holds a MA in International Relations from the University Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle and has nineteen years' experience in the international education sector. After working for the Ministry of Education in France, she held a variety of roles in the British Council Education team. Marina specialises in developing and implementing large-scale professional development programmes for teachers and school leaders.

Professor Toby Greany

Toby is a Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham, UK. He was previously Professor of Leadership and Innovation and Vice-Dean: Enterprise at the UCL Institute of Education. His former roles include Executive Director – Leadership Development at the National College for School Leadership and Special Adviser to the Education and Skills Select Committee.

Toby's research is focused on understanding the ways in which system governance mechanisms, leadership agency and evidence interact to shape current and potential educational opportunities, processes and outcomes, in particular for disadvantaged groups. His most recent book, *Leading Educational Networks: Theory, Policy and Practice*, was co-authored with Dr Annelies Kamp. He has extensive international experience and has advised the OECD, EU and ministries in several countries on issues relating to school leadership and educational system reform.

Inku Fasil

Inku Fasil holds an MA in Educational Leadership and Management from Addis Ababa University. He is an educational programmes specialist and EdTech advisor with more than 17 years of experience working with teachers, school leaders and policy makers in Ethiopia, across SSA and in the UK. At present, Inku works at the British Council Ethiopia.

Dr Arran Hamilton

Arran is Group Director of Education at Cognition Education. His early career included teaching and research at Warwick University and a period in adult and community education. Arran transitioned into educational consultancy more than 15 years ago, and has held senior positions at Cambridge Assessment, Nord Anglia Education, Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT) and the British Council. Much of this work has been international and has focused on supporting ministries of education and corporate funders to improve learner outcomes.

Arran currently oversees the design and delivery of Cognition Education's portfolio of education improvement programmes, with live projects in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. His recent books include *Building to Impact: The 5D Implementation Playbook for Educators*, *Making Room for Impact: A De-implementation Guide for Educators*, and *The Lean Education Manifesto: A Synthesis of 900+ Systematic Reviews for Visible Learning in Developing Countries*.

Professor Hyam Ishac

Hyam Ishac is a Lebanese academic and researcher who has dedicated her career to the advancement of education and research in Lebanon. She is currently the President of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) whose mandates include, but are not limited to, national curriculum development and implementation, pre-service and in-service training of teachers, and conducting educational research.

After completing her studies, Ishac began her academic career as a high-school teacher and trainer at CERD, then became a lecturer and the co-ordinator of the training bureau, as well as the co-ordinator of the initial training centre for in-service teachers at the faculty of pedagogy at the Lebanese University. She has earned multiple degrees at various Lebanese universities, which culminated in a doctorate in educational sciences, and is a prolific researcher and author.

As President of the Center for Educational Research and Development, Ishac has played a key role in supporting research and innovation in Lebanon and is currently leading the reform of the Lebanese curriculum.

Gohar Ali Khan

Gohar Ali Khan is the Director of the Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education (DCTE), Abbottabad. In this role he is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of curriculum and teacher education programmes across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His leadership is instrumental in driving educational reforms and ensuring the quality of education in the region.

His extensive experience in various key positions, combined with his educational background in organisational management and disaster management, has made him a highly respected figure in the province's public sector. He is known for his dedication to improving educational systems and contributing to the overall development of the region, and continues to play a vital role in shaping the educational and developmental landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through his leadership and expertise.

Mei Lim

Mei Lim is an Executive Director at the Reach Foundation and currently leads the organisation's place-based community development work in Feltham, London. After graduating from Oxford University, she trained as a secondary school history teacher and taught in London. She moved to Germany to study a Master of Public Policy degree for two years at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, before returning to the UK and transitioning to primary education. She was headteacher of a primary academy in Guildford before joining Reach in 2019. Mei is also a governor for a further education environmental college and trustee of a small arts education charity.

Dr Samuel Marigat

Dr Samuel Marigat, OGW, is the County Director, Teachers Service Commission in Kisumu County, Kenya. He has been a facilitator on the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme since 2012. He has served in many capacities in the teaching profession including being a deputy principal and principal for ten years.

Mercy Munialo

Mercy is a passionate education trainer with over 15 years of hands-on experience in teacher professional development. As the Senior Programmes Manager at Dignitas, she leads on the design and implementation of projects across the organisation. A passionate child and gender advocate, Mercy is keen on looking for solutions that will enable all learners to access equitable education, with a strong commitment to inclusive education. She holds a master's degree in Special Needs Education and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Education Research and Management. As a devoted Metis fellow, she remains dedicated to advancing the cause of education for all.

Rebecca Picton

Rebecca is the British Council's global lead for School Education Policy, supporting colleagues across 30 countries to engage with governments on key priorities in education reform.

She is an experienced education and programme management specialist, with over 15 years' experience working in school and higher education system development. She is involved in shaping, designing and implementing a range of complex global and regional programmes for a range of clients in the UK and internationally, and supporting strategic education reform in countries across Asia. This has included leading delivery of the British Council's flagship programme for schools, Connecting Classrooms, in South Asia between 2013 and 2018, and taking a lead role in supporting the Myanmar Ministry of Education with higher education reform as Director of Education for the British Council from 2018 to 2021.

Rebecca believes in the power of education to transform lives and is committed to doing her part to ensure that everyone has access to high quality education at any age, with a particular emphasis on the education of women and girls.

She holds an MA in Social Development from the University of East Anglia.

Akram Sabek

Akram Sabek is a senior educator, trainer, author, project manager, and researcher. He holds a degree in chemistry, a master's degree in Educational Management, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Educational Management. He began his career as a lecturer, then became the director of the Teachers' Training Center, before heading the Educational Management Department at CERD. As the General Co-ordinator of the Educational Management Committees, he led the development of ten national frameworks, including the National Framework for Community Partnerships and the National Framework for Academic Accreditation: The Updated Standards of Effective Schools. In recognition of his accomplishments, he was awarded the Gold Medal of Knowledge, First Class by the Minister of Education in 2022.

Akram was recently appointed the Co-ordinator of the National Curriculum Framework Drafting Committee, responsible for developing the National Curriculum Framework. Additionally, he is the Secretary-General of the Curriculum Development Committees, and is an EU-GIZ senior expert as a technical assistant to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for the School Leadership Development Program.

Tassama Saleh

Tassama Saleh is an accomplished educator with over three decades of experience as a teacher and trainer. She currently focuses on elevating the skills of teachers through impactful professional development initiatives, and as a member of the steering committee of the Teacher Task Force, has played a crucial role in shaping educational policies and strategies on a global scale.

Tassama has been actively involved in the design of Lebanon's new national curricula. She has also contributed to the development of numerous training courses, including innovative self-paced programmes that empower teachers to pursue their professional growth at their own pace. In 2018 she earned a prestigious fellowship from the Middle East Professional Learning Initiative (MEPLI) at Harvard University.

Emma Sarton

Emma Sarton is an experienced Senior Education Advisor at Cambridge Education. With over 20 years of experience in the education sector, she has a rich background in teaching and has significantly contributed to teacher training, leadership development, and educational programme evaluation. Currently, she serves as the Technical Director for the Girls Education Challenge (GEC), which reaches over 1.6 million marginalised girls through removing barriers to education.

Emma's expertise spans 24 countries and varied programming, where she has liaised with governments, donors, and stakeholders to implement effective educational programmes. She has authored over 150 reports, blogs, and articles, showcasing her deep understanding of educational outcomes and evidence-based strategies.

Her academic credentials include an MA in Economics of Education from the Institute of Education, an MEd in Coaching from Newcastle University, and an MA in Development Studies from Leeds University. Emma's work with organisations such as UNICEF and the British Council has further solidified her global education reputation.

In addition to her professional roles, Emma is the Director of ENABLE-ED, a community interest company that supports NGOs through capacity building and research. She is dedicated to improving educational outcomes through building strong client relationships and using pragmatic implementation evidence.

Ammar Tariq

Ammar Tariq is the Head of Education and a senior member of the country team at British Council Iraq, with over 16 years of experience in designing and delivering large-scale donor-funded programs the country. His expertise encompasses leadership, quality of education, and inclusion.

Throughout his career, Ammar has led initiatives across both basic and higher education sectors and has contributed significantly to the development of several key strategies, including the Technical and Vocational Strategy in Iraq 2013-2022, The National Framework for Inclusive Education in Iraq 2022-2031, and The Enrolment Strategy 2022-2025.

Ammar has particularly excelled in leading large and diverse teams of consultants, focusing on school leadership and inspection. His work has modernised the school inspection system to enhance its role in school improvement and inclusion. The Developing School Model, which developed in the projects he led, is the result of over 12 years of collaborative efforts with senior officials and technical teams from relevant ministries in Iraq.

Dr Isabel Tarling

Dr Isabel Tarling is a learning science scholar and Digital Learning Specialist with a PhD in Education Technologies from the University of Cape Town. She is the CEO of Limina Education Services, where she spearheads educational innovation and collaborates with development organisations such as the British Council and the GIZ.

Dr Tarling is responsible for leading and inspiring the Limina team towards achieving the company's vision to reimagine learning and enable change for 10 million learners by 2035. She has published extensively on digital learning, on learning in general, and about the various monitoring and evaluation projects conducted by herself and the Limina researchers over the years. Dr Tarling was the research lead for the development of digital guidelines in South Africa, as discussed in this publication.

Dr Sreekanth Yagnamurthy

Dr Sreekanth Yagnamurthy is a Professor in Education (Assessment Studies) and Principal, at the Regional Institute of Education, Mysuru. He is also the Chairman and Programme Director of Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Center, Mysuru. Before this, he served as Head of the Educational Survey Division, NCERT, and Associate Professor at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. In 2024 he received the HP Cambridge Partnership for Education EdTech fellowship.

He is the author of several educational books and articles and has worked as a reviewer for various publications. He was a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Educational Issues, Las Vegas, and is currently a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology, Canada. His areas of interest are student assessment, school leadership, education in the public and private sectors, and educational quality and accountability.

