

Towards an empowered system



Creating an empowered system: an evaluation strategy

(DRAFT June 2019)

Educational Reform Joint Agreement
Creating an empowered system– an evaluation strategy (DRAFT 010519)

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. Scotland has started a collective endeavour to build an empowered, connected, self-improving education system to achieve excellence and equity for all children and young people as set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF). An empowered system is built on mutual trust, cooperation and highly effective communication. In an empowered system headteachers and local authorities are partners, each contributing and supporting each other and respecting the different role each plays. This paper gives an overview of the agreed strategy for the evaluation of the impact of school empowerment

2. Educational Reform Joint Agreement

2.1. The Education Reform – Joint Agreement between Scottish and Local Government (represented by COSLA) was published in June 2018.

2.2. The Joint Agreement is based on the key principle of creating an empowered system which involves the participation of schools, teachers, pupils and parents to help achieve the national ambition of excellence and equity. An empowered system will be school and teacher led, with children and young people at the centre.

2.3. In practice, some of the short and medium term outcomes required by the Joint Agreement include headteachers making decisions in partnership with their learning community to improve outcomes for their children and young people; leading on improvement, curriculum, staffing decisions, and funding allocation of their devolved budget. In an empowered system, there will be increased participation of schools' stakeholders in local decisions about learning and improvement. This will be underpinned by key support from local authorities, RICs and national bodies, who will continue to ensure adherence to appropriate statutory, financial and contractual obligations. They will also, provide guidance and broker support. It will see those involved in schools improving their practice through engagement in professional learning and working collaboratively within, across and beyond schools to share effective practice with each other; learn from each other; and arrive at solutions to challenges together.

2.4. The Joint Agreement specifies the need for an evaluation strategy to '*review the impact of school empowerment*'. This strategy document outlines the agreed approach to evaluating school empowerment at this stage.

3. Overview of the Methodology

Approach to evaluation

3.1. Whilst many schools and local authorities are already demonstrating the dimensions of an empowered system, there remain a number of challenges in evaluating the impact of school empowerment. This is evidenced in both the Readiness for Empowerment Thematic Inspection report published by Education Scotland in 2018¹, and the initial consultation responses to the Joint Agreement².

3.2. Robustly evaluating the specific impact of school empowerment in achieving excellence and equity within a complex environment is a further challenge. Long-term goals for Scottish education focus on raising attainment and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap. There is no doubt that an empowered system will enhance and strengthen current work underway to raise attainment and close the poverty-related attainment gap. However, it is likely that a range of other factors will also contribute to such changes. These include, but are not limited to, Scottish Attainment Challenge, Pupil Equity Funding, local provision, practice and staffing, wider social policies and current financial challenges at local level.

3.3. In light of these challenges, the agreed approach to evaluating school empowerment at this stage will focus on the extent to which local authorities and schools are embedding the key principles of the empowerment agenda, and to what extent we are seeing changes in the intended short and medium term outcomes related to school empowerment. Evaluation also seeks to provide learning about what is and is not working in terms of empowerment, and to highlight the enablers and barriers to achieving a fully empowered system.

3.4. The agreed approach to evaluation is based on the principles of mutual trust and cooperation which underpin the Joint Agreement. It seeks, where possible, to reduce requirements for new data sources, instead making use of data already available within the system. This includes surveys; arrangements for data collection already in place and existing evidence from scrutiny activities and attainment related measures. This significantly reduces the time required to provide fresh data and information and helps to ensure teachers and schools are focused on teaching and learning. It is however acknowledged that some of the data sources utilised do not have explicit links to the outcomes of the reform agenda.

3.5. The agreed evaluation approach will have three key components – self-evaluation; peer review and challenge; and external evaluation. The Scottish education system has in place a well-embedded approach to quality and improvement. This is recognised and respected globally and aligns very effectively with the notion of an empowered system. It has become known as the ‘Scottish approach’ to improvement and is based on the premise that establishments and

¹ Education Scotland, 2018. Thematic Inspection of Readiness for Empowerment, [online] available at: https://education.gov.scot/Documents/National-thematic-inspection_readiness-for-empowerment.pdf

² Scottish Government, 2018. Empowering Schools Consultation; Analysis of Responses, [online] available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/analysis-responses-empowering-schools-consultation-provisions-education-scotland-bill/>

services are responsible for the quality of education they provide and take appropriate action to secure continuous improvement. External evaluation at different levels of the system supports this approach.

3.6. In an empowered system, schools take ownership of their own outcomes, for continuously evaluating their own performance and taking well-judged action to make improvements as a result. They identify priorities for improvement which take account of the local context and are in the best interests of children and young people. Therefore, the gathering of evidence will support the ambition of school empowerment by placing a strong focus on self-evaluation.

3.7. There will be a new mechanism to support and challenge local authorities on their delivery of school empowerment through a peer review and challenge process. This will support the continued development of a partnership approach to improvement through supporting a peer-to-peer approach.

3.8. Self-evaluation and peer review and challenge will be complemented by external evaluation. This will help to ensure we have a sufficient flow of independent, external evidence to support system-wide understanding of the impact of school empowerment. It will provide evidence to local authorities and schools to guide their self-evaluation and improvement work. In addition, it will help identify where external intervention is required in order to provide the necessary support and challenge. In keeping with the ethos and culture of an empowered system, any arrangements for external evaluation will be proportionate and take appropriate account of context.

4. Aims of evaluation

4.1. Evaluation of school empowerment aims to provide evidence about the extent to which the overall aims of the reform are being met.

4.2. Evaluation has the following objectives:

- Assess the extent to which stakeholders understand, engage with and further the aims of school empowerment.
- Assess the extent to which the empowerment agenda is embedded across the education system.
- Provide evidence and learning as to what is and is not working well on the schools' journey to empowerment.

4.3. To achieve these objectives, a series of questions have been provided for each of the eight key partners set out in the in [Empowered System](#). These are described within section 5 of this paper.

5. Evaluation Questions for key partners

School Leaders	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
To what extent do school leaders have a shared understanding of their responsibilities as set out in the Headteachers' Charter for School Empowerment?	Survey of school leaders (SLS and AHDS-indicative evidence)
To what extent are school leaders leading change and improvement, making decisions in partnership with their learning community within their schools?	Headteachers survey on Attainment Challenge Fund, 2018
To what extent do school leaders lead collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people?	Case studies (Education Scotland and ADES)
To what extent are school leaders involved in leading decision making around staffing and staffing structures to best support improving outcomes for learners?	Qualitative evidence from school inspections/national thematic
To what extent do school leaders empower staff to improve practice, encouraging professional dialogue, supporting career-long professional learning and collaborative enquiry, and the use of research and evidence-informed practice?	DSM 3 year reviews and updates to schemes where appropriate
To what extent are school leaders involved in making decisions around their delegated budget?	Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area
To what extent do school leaders work collaboratively with their Parent Council and wider parent forum, encouraging and supporting parents to be involved in the life of the school and in decision-making?	Peer-to-peer evidence
To what extent do school leaders support, encourage and facilitate children's and young people's participation in decisions about their own learning and the life of the learning community?	

Learners	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
To what extent do children and young people participate in making decisions related to the life and work of the school?	Pre-inspection questionnaires/national thematic inspections

<p>To what extent do children and young people participate in making decisions about their own learning?</p>	<p>Case studies</p> <p>Qualitative evidence from school inspections</p> <p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p> <p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p>
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Local authority and regional improvement collaboratives	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
<p>To what extent do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead change and improvement, making decisions in partnership with their learning community within their schools?</p>	<p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p>
<p>To what extent do local authorities encourage professional dialogue, support career-long professional learning and collaborative enquiry, and the use of research and evidence-informed practice?</p>	<p>Case studies based on regional improvement collaborative Plans</p>
<p>To what extent do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people within their local context?</p>	<p>Local authority annual National Improvement Framework reports</p> <p>Feedback from regional improvement collaboratives surveys</p>
<p>To what extent do local authorities promote collaboration across schools to achieve collective goals and aspirations for learners?</p>	<p>DSM 3 year reviews and updates to schemes where appropriate</p>
<p>To what extent do local authorities provide schools with flexibility to make decisions about staffing and leadership structures in their schools to best support improving outcomes for learners?</p>	<p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p>
<p>To what extent do local authorities support and challenge schools to manage their delegated budgets in fair, equitable and transparent way to improve outcomes for all children and young people?</p>	<p>Case studies</p> <p>Local authority Improvement plans (future)</p> <p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p>

<p>To what extent do regional improvement collaboratives enhance the work of local authorities to bring added value in improving outcomes for all children and young people?</p> <p>To what extent do local authorities enable schools to decide how funding allocated to them in a fair, transparent and equitable DSM scheme for the delivery of school education is spent in a fair and equitable way?</p>	<p>Case studies local authority Improvement plans (future)</p> <p>DSM 3 year reviews and updates to schemes where appropriate</p>
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Scottish Government and national organisations	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
<p>To what extent has Education Scotland enhanced its national offer in relation to curriculum, pedagogy and leadership?</p> <p>To what extent are schools taking account of the Professional Standards for teachers (refreshed from June 2020) which reflect empowered, collaborative teachers and school leaders?</p> <p>To what extent has Education Scotland (SCEL) enhanced the leadership support packages to build capacity and confidence in the system (eg Into Headship and Excellence in Headship)?</p>	<p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p> <p>National Improvement Framework report</p>

Partners	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
<p>To what extent do partners collaborate with the learning community to contribute to school improvement through jointly planning, delivering and evaluating work with the school?</p> <p>To what extent do partners contribute to the design, development and evaluation of the curriculum to meet local needs and improve outcomes for children and young people?</p>	<p>Pre-inspection questionnaires</p> <p>Qualitative evidence from school inspections</p> <p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p> <p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p>

Support staff	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
To what extent do support staff collaborate and contribute to school improvement?	Pre-inspection questionnaires
To what extent are support staff lifelong learners, committed to improving their practice by engaging in professional learning, enquiring collaboratively, engaging in and with research and using evidence-informed practice?	Qualitative evidence from school inspections
To what extent do support staff participate in collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people?	Case studies
To what extent do support staff support, encourage and facilitate children's and young people's participation in decisions about their own learning and the life of the learning community?	Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area
To what extent do support staff seek to develop trusting relationships with parents and carers and help to foster the home learning environment?	Peer-to-peer evidence

Teachers and practitioners	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
To what extent do teachers and practitioners collaborate and contribute to school improvement?	Pre-inspection questionnaires
To what extent are teachers and practitioners lifelong learners, committed to improving their practice by engaging in professional learning, enquiring collaboratively, engaging in and with research and using evidence-informed practice?	Qualitative evidence from school inspections
To what extent do teachers and practitioners participate in collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people?	Education Scotland (SCEL) on effectiveness of professional learning
To what extent do teachers and practitioners support, encourage and facilitate children's and young people's	Case studies
	GTCS Professional Update Annual

<p>participation in decisions about their own learning and the life of the learning community?</p> <p>To what extent do teachers and practitioners seek to develop trusting relationships with parents and carers and help to foster the home learning environment?</p>	<p>Evaluation Longitudinal Overview report 2014-18</p> <p>EIS Value Education Value Teachers survey</p> <p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p> <p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p> <p>DSM 3 year reviews and updates to schemes where appropriate</p>
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Parents and carers	
Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source
<p>To what extent do Parent Councils and wider parent fora work collaboratively with schools to encourage and support parents to be involved in the life of the school and in decision-making?</p> <p>To what extent do parents work collaboratively with schools on curriculum design and improvement?</p>	<p>Pre-inspection questionnaires</p> <p>Qualitative evidence from school inspections</p> <p>DSM 3 year reviews and updates to schemes where appropriate</p> <p>Parental Involvement Engagement (PIE) census?</p> <p>Local authority self-evaluation of school empowerment in the local area</p> <p>Peer-to-peer evidence</p>

6. Sources of evidence

- School inspection findings
- Case studies provided by ADES and Education Scotland
- The Parental Involvement and Engagement Survey - this will be piloted in May and June 2019, with results analysed in Autumn 2019
- GTCS data
- Independent review of RICs
- NIF report publishing Dec 2019
- Published DSM Schemes 2020-2024 (3 year review and updates to schemes where appropriate)
- SLS headteacher surveys
- AHDS member surveys
- Local authority self-evaluation for school empowerment

7. Evaluation Timeline.

The table below gives an overview of the evaluation timeline. It shows when evaluation activities related to each of the eight areas and planned data sources will take place. It also shows when evaluation reports will be compiled and published.

When	Evidence source	Focus of information to be collected	Responsibility	Existing/ existing to be adapted/ new
2018/19				
December 2018	Local Authority self-evaluation for school empowerment (as used to inform Thematic inspection)	School leaders, learners, local authorities and RICs, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	Local Authorities	Existing
December 2018	EIS Value Education Value Teachers survey	Online survey of EIS members	EIS	Existing
March 2019	Curriculum Leadership Thematic Inspection	School leaders, learners, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners	Education Scotland	Existing
June 2019	Parental and Pupil Participation Thematic Inspection	School leaders, learners, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners	Education Scotland	Existing
October 2019	Pre-inspection questionnaires (collated national evidence)	Learners, teachers and practitioners, support staff, parents and carers, partners	Education Scotland	Existing

Pilot taking place in May/June 2019	Parental involvement and engagement (PIE) Survey	Parents and carers	Scottish Government	Existing
2019	GTCS Professional Update Annual Evaluation Longitudinal Overview report 2014-18	Teacher professionalism	GTCS	Existing
2019/2020				
August 2019 October 2019 January 2020	SLS	Headteachers	SLS	Existing
Date to be confirmed	AHDS	AHDS Members	AHDS	Existing
October 2019	Pre-inspection questionnaires (collated national evidence)	Learners, teachers and practitioners, support staff, parents and carers, partners	Education Scotland	Existing
December 2019	NIF report	Local authorities and RICs, SG and national organisations	Scottish Government	Existing
December 2019	Local authority self-evaluation for school empowerment	School leaders, learners, local authorities and RICs, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	Local Authorities	New
2020-2024	DSM 3 year review and updates to schemes as appropriate	School leaders, local authorities and RICs, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	Local Authorities	New

Session 19/20	Local Authorities Annual National Improvement Framework reports	Local authorities and RICs	Local Authorities	Existing
March 2020	Qualitative evidence from school inspections/thematics	School leaders, learners, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	Education Scotland	Existing and to be adapted
2020 (Fieldwork March, Report August)	RIC Review	To assess progress in the further development and impact of RICs, as agreed between Scottish Ministers and COSLA	Commissioned jointly by Scottish Government and COSLA	New (follows an initial review in Autumn 2018)
August each year	Local Authority Improvement Plans	Local authorities plan and report on the measures they are taking to address the key priorities of the NIF	Local Authorities	Existing
Throughout session 19/20	Peer-to-peer evidence	Senior leaders, learners, local authorities and RICs, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	ADES	New
Spring 2020	Headteacher survey on Attainment Challenge Fund	Headteachers' views	Senior leaders	SG
2020 Dates to be determined following the pilot	Parental involvement and engagement (PIE) Survey	Parents and carers	Scottish Government	Existing-pilot 2019 - to be adapted 19/20
Throughout session 19/20	SCEL reports on effectiveness of professional learning	Senior leaders, teachers and practitioners	Education Scotland	New

Throughout session 19/20	Case Studies	School leaders, learners, local authorities and RICs, partners, support staff, teachers and practitioners, parents and carers	Education Scotland and ADES	New - to be commissioned
2020/21				
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