Excellence in Headship Stretch 2

Headteacher agency for system change
January 2024

Context and Think Piece Summaries.

Contents

Context

Excellence in Headship Stretch (EiH Stretch) commenced in August 2020 as a progressive strand to the Excellence in Headship core programme.

EiH Stretch is designed to further develop and challenge experienced headteachers seeking opportunities to create positive change in the Scottish education system. The programme explores the key elements of collaborative systems and aims to provide opportunities for headteachers to support their capacity to contribute to system leadership in an empowered system.

A major element of the programme is a collaborative professional enquiry around key areas of educational policy and theory identified by enquiry groups. The purpose of the enquiry is not simply to research and deepen shared knowledge but also to inform future action and improvement. The collaborative enquiry groups seek to 'nudge' the system at the most appropriate level(s). Groups are then tasked with developing a 'Think Piece' that highlights their collaborative enquiry findings in the form of observations and recommendations. These are then shared with colleagues across the Scottish education system, including Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national agencies to support headteacher influence and participation in the policy making process.

Scottish School leaders have explored and developed 'Think pieces' related to a range of educational areas such as, qualifications and assessment, digital learning, empowerment, inclusion, racial literacy and system collaboration.

Now on the second iteration of EiH Stretch, participants have had the opportunity to engage in professional learning sessions with a range of national and international contributors to the programme such as Dr Simon Breakspear, Dr Karen Edge, Anton Florek, Professor Morag Treanor, Dr Khadija Mohammed, Peter DeWitt ED.D, Professor Chris Chapman, Professor Graeme Donaldson and Santiago Rincon Gallardo. The impact of EiH Stretch can be illustrated in relation to school leader participant's involvement in supporting national policy drivers such as Empowerment in addition to innovative system leadership working with Public Health Scotland, an example of multi-agency collaboration stimulated by headteacher participant 'Think Pieces'.

Engaging with policy making through a professional learning and leadership lens has supported school leaders to contribute and influence national policy, bringing their perspectives and compressed experience to the 'table' via a focus on a 'wicked issue' that directly affects their settings and unique contexts from a local level.

School leadership is a key driver for improvement. Evidence from the OECD and elsewhere demonstrates that leaders, at all levels, who are empowered and collaborative, and who empower others, are well placed to ensure the highest quality of learning and teaching. In an empowered school-led system, school leaders should be part of the collective leadership of the system, as well as leaders within their own organisation. The leadership skills required include: working across organisational boundaries; building shared values and trust; drawing on a wide range of perspectives and resources across systems to design local solutions; and reflecting local context, communities and aspirations.

An Empowered System – School Leaders July 2021

Collaborative Enquiry Questions

EiH Stretch participants were encouraged to consider a range of system issues and formed collaborative enquiry groups addressing the following aspects:

- *Does Scottish Education have a connectivity problem? Would empowering all school leaders to be at the heart of system change increase its bandwidth and improve the capacity of the leadership network?*
- *How could the system ensure quality and consistency of career long professional learning (CLPL) offer to classroom teachers?*
- *Can the voice of the Head Teacher be amplified to shape Scottish education policy for system gains?*
- *The Evolution of Profiling in Scottish Education: How can equitable pupil profiling be implemented successfully to achieve the aims of Scotland's Curriculum?*
- *'Count us in!' Headteacher Voice: How can more headteachers be included in the formation and development of policy and scrutiny in the local and national contexts?*
- *If systemic structures that support Head Teachers are prioritised would there be a positive impact on recruitment and retention?*
- *The impact on staff of working with learners who display behaviour that challenges?*

Lead Specialists: Our role in facilitating Excellence in Headship Stretch

Education Scotland Professional Learning and Leadership Lead Specialists have acted as facilitators and connectors; signposting participants to relevant contacts, resources and networks, related to their area of collaborative enquiry. Through the exploration of collaborative enquiry we have supported our colleagues in developing a shared understanding of collaborative professionalism, enquiry and system leadership.

This system leadership learning has been designed with the National Model of Professional Learning at the heart: The communication of these Think Piece summaries is an important stage in this process as headteachers communicate their learning journey, findings and further explore empowerment and headteacher agency.

"Leaders in the widest sense understand that people are the drivers and enactors of change for improvement. Professional learning and development is the means by which this is put into action."

National model of professional learning[1]

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[1] The national model of professional learning | Professional Learning | Education Scotland

Key Observations and Recommendations

System Connectivity

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

Does Scottish Education have a connectivity problem? Would empowering all school leaders to be at the heart of system change increase its bandwidth and improve the capacity of the leadership network?

Four headteachers from different local authorities explore the workings of the education system in Scotland. Methodological approaches included interviews with strategic education leaders, research in to the 'as is' and explorations of their own collective tacit knowledge and experience.

The enquiry group explore whether a failure to adequately represent school leaders in the system has led to a leadership gap that prevented effective knowledge mobilisation and system-wide clarity. Recommendations centre upon an enhanced role for school leaders in system improvement at all levels.

Participants

Lindsay Manton, Anstruther Primary School, Fife Council
Fiona MacKenzie, Kilbarchan Primary School, Renfrewshire Council
Tom Black, Lornshill Academy, Clackmannanshire Council
Martin Anderson, Airdrie Academy, North Lanarkshire Council

Our research

We began by considering the impact of political decisions on the education system. How these decisions impact national, regional and local activity and what might a depoliticised education system look like? For us the term depoliticised focused on a system that was either free from single party-political interference or fully supported by a cross party approach. An education system founded upon a collective responsibility for the outcomes of our young people (Hargreaves, 2018), where there was coherence within and across the system, creating a shared vision and accountability for improvement that is united in practice and "protected" by all agencies.

Creating clarity within a complex system requires effective communication and clear principles to arrive at a shared vision, priorities need to align. As Hargreaves (2018) points out this can be achieved through mutual dialogue, collective autonomy, common meaning and purpose and based upon collaborative enquiry. It was through our engagement and discussions with a range of strategic educational leaders (Directors of Education, Chief Executives, Professional Researchers and Authors) that we realised that our concerns over the system would not be solved by removing voices, such as politicians who were democratically elected to represent society. Rather it was about ensuring those involved in the system were appropriately represented. We asked ourselves, where were Head Teachers in this conversation and were they ready, individually and as part of a systems wide approach, to engage in it?

These research conversations helped us to reframe our focus onto Headteacher Agency and what that could mean for the education system moving forwards. The reframing allowed us to move from that which we knew, or thought we knew, into the second field of knowledge, exploring what was known by others in the system.

We asked:

1. What does Head Teacher empowerment/involvement look like within your system/current role? And how does Head Teacher empowerment/involvement impact upon your work?
2. Is there sufficient Head Teacher involvement to make positive change in your system? Yes/No? Why/Why not? What could this look like?

3. Possible futures. What could it look like? Considering international examples of de-politicised education systems, to what extent has this taken place and how involved are Head Teachers in national conversations? What are your views on such an approach?

There was consensus of opinion in the following themes:

- A unanimous response for a change to a wider 'school system' which helps others to thrive and build sustainability from within – connectivity.
- Strong agreement for the space for Headteachers to be system creators/shifters/ implementers as opposed to being executive headteachers – an increase in bandwidth.
- The need to maintain system subsidiarity, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Effective agency requires autonomy and structures, creating defined Headteacher networks.

Opinions differed regarding the willingness of the education system to make genuine space at the table for school leaders, and uncertainty from those interviewed as to the readiness of all Head Teachers to contribute to policy creation and strategic system change conversations. What would those currently in the role, operating in a landscape marked by social and economic challenges managing competing operational and strategic pressures, say about this call to join the policy makers?

We posed three questions to Primary and Secondary Head Teachers and analysed the emerging themes. It was clear that connectivity, bandwith and networks underpinned their responses.

Connectivity

What do you think about the suggestion that head teachers should work in a more 'corporate' way, being involved in policy discussions, looking at research, being involved in making decisions that impact on the kind of education we have in Scotland?

There was a clear consensus and support for Head teachers to be actively engaged with leadership and change beyond their schools, an appetite to be more connected with the wider educational system. They were prepared to support and lead on priorities which would impact upon learners across regions, nationally and internationally, demonstrating the collective responsibility we have for all those who learn in our schools. Those interviewed gave examples of where, once connected with others in our system and with colleagues from other sectors, outcomes for our learners improved exponentially. It was clear from those interviewed that in principle, a chair at the policy table would be welcomed.

Singapore is an international example of system connectivity, school leaders are called to lead 'nationally', taking a systems-based approach to consider how local decisions impact national performance. This connected leadership system may be a contributing factor in Singapore being ranked number one globally, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022. This is a powerful argument for Scottish Education to grow its leadership network, bringing Head Teachers together to create and drive forward policy and system change. Would this move us beyond our PISA ranking of fourteenth and tackle our ever-increasing performance gap (PISA, 2022)?

From our research there is evidence of a tension within the education system. A tension that has created a leadership gap between school leaders and educational systems. Our research shows a genuine willingness of school leaders to become agents of change beyond their school, but a framework is needed, outlining the collaborative terms of reference for all those in the system. A need for structure to underpin agency and collaboration was a recurring theme from our conversations with the various strategic leaders we met with in our enquiry. How does the system become better informed by involving those leading our schools and in turn, how does their involvement better inform the critical and political analysis of those leading the schools? How do we move from being "done to" towards being "done with" when it comes to leading change in policy and collaboration?

"If we have learned anything over recent decades about large-scale improvement in education, it is that reforms 'done to the system' do not have the desired effects. The evidence, not just from education, but also more generally, is that reform strategies must be explained and implemented in ways that engage the idealism and professional commitments of (in this case) educators" (Greany, 2015).

Bandwidth

Do you think there is a willingness in the current system to 'make space at the table' for Head teachers?

When we posed this question to our peer Headteachers the responses received stated either *unsure* or *no*. The apparent complexity of current governance arrangements and policy creation processes in Scottish education do not facilitate Head teacher agency and involvement. Is there space or bandwidth to develop a more effective system connectivity model? In addition, given the pressures outlined above and from various national workload questionnaires, do our school leaders have the space or bandwith to participate fully in such conversations?

The education system needs to harness the full potential of its school leaders "school leadership is a collective enterprise" (Fullan, 2003), to build leadership capitol and in turn develop a leadership culture for colleagues within the system. From our research there is a need for system "bandwidth" to be scoped out as a priority, "change must focus on how we better ensure the needs and views of all learners, teachers and practitioners, together with wider societal and economic implications, are brought to the fore and met in terms of organisational mindset, governance and decision making" (Muir, 2022).

Network

What do you think of the readiness of HT's / Practitioners to join this type of discussion / system? (Could be yes/no) or what do you see as the strengths/weaknesses in this approach?

The responses developed and expanded upon the concern around bandwidth. Headteacher colleagues highlighted the day-to-day operational pressures which frequently impede strategic discourse, across settings, local authorities and regions. "Teachers and school leaders are challenged by increasing needs of students, parents and the local community while at the same time responding to the demands of governments, various departments, private providers, unions, media associations, pressure groups and statutory bodies" (MacDonald, Dixon and Tiplady, 2019). Despite the enormous pressures on our schools and school leaders there remained throughout, an unwavering call from Headteachers to be part of larger system network, with one interviewee suggesting that school leaders were "largely an untapped resource."

"A greater sense of ownership of educational policy and greater sensitivity to the realities of the implementation of policy will help to combat ambiguity and further embed responsibility for the quality of the educational experience in schools and classrooms." (ICEA report, 2023)

In a time of social, political and economic upheaval, what value could be obtained from moving a system, which has the capacity to bring about improved outcomes for our young people, as Chapman (2019) suggests, from a hierarchical structure to a flatter culture with high levels of social cohesion through partnerships, collaboration and co-creation?

What needs to change?

Our research moved us from examining that which we knew well, our contexts, settings and learners, towards considering what known within the system and beyond. Those interviewed called in to question some of our long-held beliefs and challenged our assumptions and understanding of how the system worked. In doing so we refined our position and generated new knowledge, forming a body of evidence upon which informed system change recommendations could be made.

- A framework for all Head Teacher involvement in policy and system change – increasing system connectivity
- A commitment of time and support structures to ensure all Head teachers are able to collaborate and lead local, regional and national developments – increasing system bandwidth
- An understanding that all Head teachers support and learn with and from one other, utilising the power of their collective wisdom - an investment in leadership networks

"The very features that make systems so powerful – the way in which they bring together different components to achieve a purpose – also make them difficult to change. Setting out to change an entire system in all its complexity often seems hopelessly ambitious" (Florek A, 2022). This is about more than school leaders – this is about a self-improving school system, "A self-improving system cannot be driven by teachers if they are isolated in individual schools or academy chains. The most successful school improvement systems (evaluated by the McKinsey reports) have a strong "middle tier" connecting individual schools and teachers to a wider network of support for innovation from other areas, current best practice, continuing professional development, and the eye of a "critical friend" from within the sector and outside the school" (Smith, 2018).

The leadership system in Scotland needs **all** school leaders to be empowered to pioneer change - a systems reboot is essential to achieve the connectivity, bandwidth, and networks that we are proposing.

System Quality Career Long Professional Learning

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

How could the system ensure quality and consistency of career long professional learning (CLPL) offer to classroom teachers?

This think piece on career long professional learning (CLPL) focuses on the wide variability of provision and recommends measures that would reduce this. The collaborative group consisted of three headteachers from different authorities.

Working from the premise that the quality of learning and teaching is directly related to CLPL the head teachers reviewed on their own CLPL experience. They then widened their study by interviewing key players in CLPL and considered national and international research.

Finally, the group reflected on the impact that high quality CLPL has had on their leadership and then made a series of system-wide recommendation to reaffirm the links between CLPL, learning and teaching and improvement.

Participants

Pauline Swan – HT Rosshall Academy, Glasgow City Council
Jacqui Smith – HT Timmergreens Primary, Angus Council
Louise Gray – HT St John's Primary, South Ayrshire.

Aim – ensure all young people experience quality teaching and learning from highly skilled and motivated teachers in all areas of Scotland

Inspiration for our enquiry:

Our own experiences led us to a shared **understanding of the following** -

- Recognition of the impact high quality, inspiring CLPL has had on our own professional development as leaders.

- Frustration at the inconsistency in CLPL offers across Scotland – e.g. bigger authorities more available resources to spend on CLPL.

- Frustration of LA's trying to buy 'quick fix' approaches from independent sellers e.g. Visible Learning (OSIRIS), Making Thinking Visible (MTV), Phonics and spelling approaches and numeracy interventions without consultation with HT's prior to implementation. Significant impact on Working time agreements (WTA) that don't necessarily link to school improvement plans.

- Feedback from recent HMIe inspection reports comment on improvements needed to support outcomes for pupils', in particular pace, challenge and differentiation, however, there is no national approach to supporting this.

- A collective agreement that if we were able to invest in our staff, raise skills and all focus on similar CLPL attainment would be affected in a positive way

- Link between CLPL and the GTCS Standards is vital and if everyone was accessing a bank of quality assured CLPL opportunities career progression would be more effective

- The knowledge that all of our schools and community are different but we all follow the same curriculum and have the same expectations – we need to work together more and ensure that RIC's and LA's communicate and share excellent practices, CLPL and data more effectively

- Need to change the culture around CLPL. Staff should feel valued and there needs to be a change that training is not a 2-hour online twilight.

Our professional leadership learning journey:

What is known –

- Initial teacher training varies across the differing universities in Scotland – GTCS Standards for Initial Registration are in place but LA's oversee the trainee year in differing ways – Feedback from HT meetings at local authority level indicate an increasing concern in the knowledge base of students and NQTs

- There is a need for all professional bodies, GTCS, Ed Scot, Universities to work together to support initial teacher training and ensure that the best teachers qualify to teach in Scotland – Feedback from HT's indicate that staff supporting students feel that there are workload issues when universities have different formats and plans for students. i.e. teaching commitment each week, competition of folders, use of online planning etc.

- GTCS professional update is completed in different ways across LA's as is records of keeping CLPL and PRD processes – Staff in school state this is a tick box exercise they do to ensure they have enough detail for the end of the sign off period

- Additional 35 hours CLPL annually (1.0fte) is mandated for all teaching staff – how they access CLPL opportunities and record impact of this is varied – In discussion with local authority Unions it is felt that the burdens of dysregulated behaviours is increasing the amount of personal time staff have to spend training on Autism, ADHD etc. The increase in use of technology is also another huge CLPL burden for staff, so time for curriculum CLPL becomes very limited.

- CLPL undertaken as a 2-hour twilight has very limited impact for staff and children

- All LA's have different in-service days, differing improvement priorities, differing levels of support for schools (QIO's etc.)

- RICs have been established and all are working on various workstreams – impact in schools is low at the moment and few class practitioners can identify how the RIC's are supporting their practices. Opportunities for teachers to meet are all after school – this is not a popular option for staff but cover implications in school impact on the access for staff to day time training.

- All schools across Scotland are consistently improving or working to improve the quality of L and T. There are examples of excellent practice identified by HMIe and Education Scotland and these are shared through Education Scotland Website – should this be picked up more through ADES meetings and a consistent approach identified?

- Education Scotland Website is difficult to negotiate and find the resources staff need to support their professional development

- Lots of support for moderation and curriculum design at the current time – are schools aware of this via their local authority? Is there time for schools to engage with these materials? Is it on all local authority plans?

- Our children and communities are continually changing and we are seeing more need for many children and young people in our school – this puts huge pressures on our staff and their professional skills

- PEF /SAC monies have allowed many companies to begin to sell professional learning packages to schools and LA's – who is quality assuring these offers? How do we know that these suit our Scottish context, priorities and curriculum?

- New professional bodies and curriculum reform – allow opportunities for collaboration and more unified approaches across Scotland but how do we maximise the potential for this?

- Leadership pathways, Into Headship etc. are excellent resources for those who wish to follow that pathway – how do we encourage those who do not want promotion to continue to develop knowledge and skills across their career?

- HMIE – visit more schools and see more pedagogy than any other professional body – how do they contribute towards professional development? How can this be made more accessible to classroom practitioners?

- Lack of consistency across Scotland including for support of denominational schools

- CLPL offer should be consistent regardless of political landscape, locality or resource availability.

What Current Research tell us -

Through participation in this project we have become clear that teacher pedagogy and effectiveness lies at the heart of all school improvement. Chapman and Donaldson highlight this in their document, Learning Scotland's future – March 2023 and state -

"…put simply the quality of learning and teaching is directly related to the Professional Learning" (P5)

In Putting Learners' at the centre; towards a future vision for Scottish Education (2022) - Professor Ken Muir notes that:

"There is some CPD available at a national level for practitioners wishing to improve their leadership skills with a view to applying for promotion… However – there is barely any nationally or locally available CPD aimed at supporting teachers to improve their classroom practice. Teaching is a craft as well as a profession – we should be regularly reviewing our practice, considering research and discussing how our pedagogy could improve. CPD on this is simply not available to most teachers in Scotland."

He goes on to state that,

"There is feedback from parts of the country which is very positive about the support provided by Education Scotland. However, this is very inconsistent which would suggest that there is not a clear structure/framework for the support to be delivered. It is too reliant on individuals." (Local Authorities/Local Government).

His research also showed that when considering support for professional learning and leadership, the public consultation showed that there were a greater number of positive responses to the question about whether there was clarity on where support for professional learning and leadership could be accessed, compared to views on where support for curriculum and assessment could be accessed.

The National Improvement Framework and improvement plan 2023 also noted that
HM Inspectors found that the development of consistent, high-quality learning and teaching remains an area of priority in most schools and ELC settings. This includes improving the use of assessment to understand progress and providing timely, effective feedback to children and young people about their learning.

David Hargeaves sets out what he believes to be the cornerstone led by schools for schools. Key to success is what he describes as a collective moral purpose or that which motivates and sustains teachers in their professional commitment. (ADES, 2017) In their paper – Towards a Learning System: a new approach to raising standards for all in Scottish Schools (2017) they discuss the need for a collective moral purpose which unites all of those working in the public sector to produce a collaborative capital (Hargreaves). This notion of "collaborative professionalism" (Fullan and Hargreaves) would encourage the whole educational system to unite in a single focus of developing collaborative

approaches to systemic change aimed at improving the learning outcomes for all learners. This would surely provide a positive, equitable CLPL offer for all teachers/ practitioner in Scotland.

How has the CE impacted your leadership?

- As a Headteachers, we have developed our thinking beyond our Local Authorities to inform our strategic planning for our School Improvement Plans.

- We recognise the value in having the opportunity to influence the system at a national level and engage with a wide range of peers from a variety of different areas in education and government.

- We have made positive links with colleagues from across Scotland and have learned a great deal about what goes on in other Local Authorities and areas of Scotland. This helps us to see areas that require improvement in the system much more clearly.

- We have grown in confidence in our own knowledge and expertise and taking part in this project has affirmed our roles as leaders in Scotland.

- Through undertaking research and engaging in the learn sessions with the array of guest speakers we have, we have been able to invest in our professional development which is then cascaded to our staff in our own school, our clusters and local authorities.

- We have gained through participation in the programme a much broader view of the implications of Education Reform which has supported us well in building capacity in the school leadership team to navigate the current and future priorities.

- Recognising the need to make time for ourselves to learn and also to identify new and exciting opportunities for staff to really engage in high quality learning. Creating space to think and reflect and engage.

- We have a greater sense of clarity in relation to the responsibilities associated with leading and implementing priorities associated with the National Discussion (All Learners in Scotland Matter), in particular the role of the new agency and The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.

- We are enthused about the opportunities that the current education reform offers us and are keen to be involved in shaping this. We hope this think piece will support this.

Summary:

In summary we have found that the CLPL offer for teachers/practitioners at the current time is not meeting the needs of the system as effectively as it could. We believe that this period of educational reform offers the opportunity to do this better and in turn improve the learning, teaching and attainment taking place in Scotland.

Our Recommendations for Improvement are –

- The new agency should have a system in place to robustly endorse high quality Professional Learning for classroom teachers relating to pedagogy

- Clear national priorities for improvement should be considered and core CLPL linked to this should be offered to all teachers across Scotland

- Encourage leaders to consider the additional non-contact time becoming ring fenced to focus on Professional Learning which has been endorsed and recognised as high quality

- A requirement for every teacher to complete endorsed CLPL related to stage of career linking to the GTCS Standard to support PU process should be in place.

- To further develop a culture of all teachers being lead learners and being accountable for their own development.

- To create a culture where Professional Learning is essential not desirable and more time given i.e. more INSET days/time built into 35 hours with agreed high-quality training provided.

- Improved collaboration across LAs/RIC/GTCS/New Agency.

- More liaison re in-service dates across authorities and this time used by national agencies to support the professional activities taking place on these days.

- The Government should provide a statement regarding arrangements to ensure high quality professional learning for all educational practitioners in Scotland. This could be a similar approach to Wales who did this in September 2023.

- CLPL should be valued as a profession and should move away from the existing model of twilights often online. More needs to be done to ensure that there is time, space and opportunities to invest in the teachers/leaders of the future.

- More teachers and leaders to have opportunities for learning on a national and international level.

Next Steps:
What will you do now?

Continue to collaborate as a trio to continue to develop as a system's leader.
Work with the new agency to develop a system to ensure high quality CLPL for all teachers

With thanks to everyone who contributed towards this enquiry through their time, porfessional dialogue and discussion.

Amplification of Head Teacher Voice

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

Can the voice of the Head Teacher be amplified to shape Scottish education policy for system gains?

This think piece explores a system that is disconnected, with fractures between the layers and numerous system actors. This prevents coherence between research, policy and practice. The collaborative enquiry involved five headteachers from five local authorities.

The group who are experienced decision makers nationally and locally engaged with research and researchers, government officials, the International Council of Education Advisers and school leaders. In addition, education systems that involve school leaders in leading to effective policy change were considered

The group wish to move the engagement of school leaders in policy from 'listening and implementing' to co-construction and early involvement in policy making. Recommendations cover porosity of school leadership roles that allow them to operate at a range of levels in the system and comment on dangers of perverse incentives that can skew the intentions of Scotland's curriculum.

Participants

Kevin Boyd - HT Belmont Academy, South Ayrshire
Marianne Docherty - HT Hermitage Primary, Argyll and Bute
Mike Irving - HT Leith Academy, Edinburgh
Linda Reed - HT Garnetbank Primary, Glasgow
Liz White - HT Calderglen High School, South Lanarkshire

Inspiration for our enquiry

Our cross-sectoral team came together as part of the 'Excellence in Headship Stretch' (EiH) programme. Collectively we have extensive experience of headship and have influenced decision-making at local and national level, with a view to improving outcomes for children and young people.
Through our experience as leaders and our new knowledge from learning about system leadership through the EiH stretch programme, we recognise there are multiple, often disconnected, system layers and 'many hands' working on Scottish education. Such complexity within the system is inhibiting the inter-connectedness of research, policy, and practice, often leading to things not "landing as well as they could" with those who are required to implement policy. A Professional Learning session on the development of the Scottish Government 'stretch aims' policy highlighted this challenge and led us to consider the extent to which the voice and influence of the Head Teacher is fully optimised in educational reform and policy development. We also wanted to explore any examples of Head Teachers being involved in shaping and co-constructing policies, all of which helped us frame our enquiry question:

Can the voice of the Head Teacher be amplified to shape Scottish education policy for system gains?

In exploring this question, our group conducted online and in-person interviews and email communication with researchers and stakeholders at all levels and across sectors. This work was enhanced by extensive reading, reflection, and professional discussion.

1.1 What is known

We know Head Teachers are 'caught at the pinch point of education' (*Forde, Torrance, Mitchell, McMahon, Harvie 2022)*'.

1.2 Our observations

Being in the pinch point creates both opportunities and challenges. Head Teachers engage with every level of the system, seeing above, below, and around in the system. It is widely acknowledged that effective systems utilise the expertise of those closest to delivery. However, currently the method of involving Head Teachers in co-development is ad-hoc and limited. Often consultation committees are imbalanced between research, policy, and education expertise. There is certainly a willingness to listen and consult but unless there is a systematic approach to Head Teachers shaping policy, then the reality of requests for quick decisions on policy to be implemented and short timescales for seeking wider input will continue to allow only limited and ad-hoc representation from those who will be asked to implement. Furthermore, lack of Head Teacher involvement carries the potential to adversely affect the implementation and, consequently, the effectiveness of any given policy.

We agree with the following:

'There is a risk of top-down demands of the NIF (National Improvement Framework) attainment targets undermining the concept of HT autonomy. Sustainable solutions are unlikely without engagement with HT in decision-making about the development of national guidance for schools.' (*Education governance and the role of the headteacher: the new problem in Scottish education. Forde, Torrance, Mitchell, McMahon, Harvie 2022*).

Head Teachers from across all sectors are required to implement policies while often not having been involved, or represented, in their development. Their views and that of the profession are often sought and indeed we have current examples of an unprecedented level of consultation with all stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, and employers as well as young people, parents, and teachers. What is important now is that action follows the consultations as highlighted in the November 2023 Report of the International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA). Furthermore, will Head Teachers be part of the decision-making for the planned action and in the early shaping of policy with regards to reform recommendations? If so, how will this be structured and how will it be representative of all sectors? Current representative groups are important [for example, ADES, Professional Associations/BOCSH] but how do Head Teachers across the country feed into them and how representative are they of all sectors?

2.1 What is known:

Research of 20 improving systems found that there are three circumstances that regularly "ignite" school system reform:
   a. Political and economic crises
   b. A high profile and critical report about system performance
   c. New political or strategic leaders.
(Source: How the worlds most improved school systems keep getting better, Nov 2010)

2.2 Our Observations

Currently, in Scotland, each of these three circumstances are burning brightly. There is a shifting policy landscape, and numerous reports and recommendations have been published following robust, extensive consultation on educational reform (The National Discussion, Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment, Withers, Muir, and Stobart reports) with a reform agenda to be tabled and new agencies being created. At the same time there is a substantial rise in the levels of poverty, a reduction in resources and an ever- changing political landscape. Our team considered what a system leader might do to light the fire and keep it burning in the years to come. As a fire starter, we believe that more effective utilisation of the voice of the Head Teacher and their co-construction of policy could benefit the system at all levels.

3.1 What is known
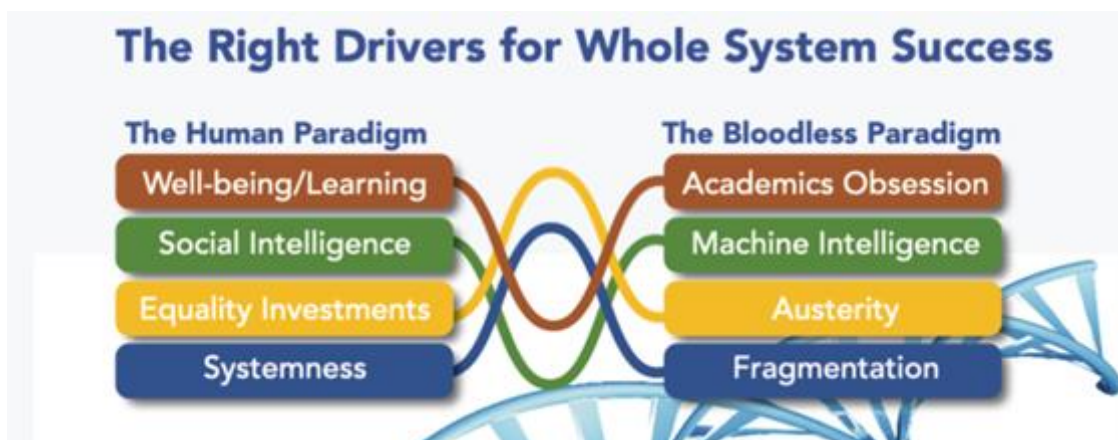
3.2 Our observations

Fullan's right drivers for whole-system success (2021) are within grasp in Scottish education, but the Scottish system can be inadvertently pulled in the wrong direction by 'the bloodless paradigm'. By way of illustration, the chosen metrics used in Scottish education, (particularly by the Scottish Government and how these are used as comparators/ signs of effectiveness) can influence practical implementation decisions on the ground. Emphasis can be directed towards what is measured, rather than valuing the much broader picture of holistic development of children and young people and what should be delivered in relation to wellbeing, learning, development of attributes and skills (the four capacities). For example, gathering and comparing data on ACEL (Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels), Stretch Aims, "5@ measures" suggests 'academic obsession driver'. This can encourage a lack of parity of esteem on vocational versus academic, alongside pathway decisions which are driven by tariff points / exchange as opposed to what is best suited to the skills and interests of the young person.
The tension we currently have is to 'meet the needs of all learners' in line with GIRFEC principles and reduce the poverty related attainment gap. At present it can feel as though we (the system) values / measures 'speed of achievement / a snapshot in time' which can fuel political discourse and judgement often played out in the media in a way which is unhelpful to schools or children and families. At times it can feel we (the system) are not valuing / capturing/learning from the progress all learners over time make with support and intervention. The metrics of the system could be seen as incentivising an academics obsession, rather than truly developing the four capacities and the right driver of 'wellbeing and learning.'

In the primary context, literacy and numeracy 'achievement of a level data' and 'stretch aims data' is collated and compared in p1, p4 and p7. Often, many children identified as 'not achieving the level' (within the timescales) have indeed made exceptional progress, from their starting point, benefitting from school targeted support and interventions. They continue to make progress at their own pace but are judged as 'not on track' within the wider system data lens.

The context of the learner journey is critical to understand the achievement and pace of learning. For example, a school with approximately 80% of primary 1 and P4 with English as an additional language (many of whom go on to achieve beyond the expected level in future) will not maintain the same pace of literacy progress as a school with almost all English language speakers in P1 and P4 - however strong learning progress can be made in both contexts. Furthermore, often children submitted as 'not achieving' have an identified additional support need (e.g. bereavement/ learning difference/ medical need), however, they are making substantial progress at their own pace (due to the effectiveness of the support and intervention in place). Yet improvement discussion and analysis often remain narrowly fixed around

pedagogy of literacy and numeracy and academic progress, rather than the wider lens of 'wellbeing and learning' and GIRFEC.

The current external narrow lens of focus on achievement data, could be missing the opportunity to identify and learn from successes and effectiveness in supporting all children to make progress in 'wellbeing and learning' as a system.

4.1 What is known

Santiago Rincon Gallardo discusses four internationally understood fundamental purposes of education. He highlights that Scotland's CfE vision of all children developing the four capacities is 'enlightened' as the capacities are directly aligned with the four fundamental purposes:

Four fundamental purposes of education. To prepare children and young people to:	The Four Capacities of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence
know themselves	confident individuals
think and learn by themselves	successful learners
take care of themselves and others	responsible citizens
better the world	effective contributors

Delivered through the 4 contexts for learning

Chapman & Donaldson [Learning is Scotland's Future 2023] talk about barriers that can limit change and improvement in Scottish education:

"National policies that unintentionally encourage schools to narrow educational experiences"
and they conclude that *"pupils can come to serve the school's reputation rather than the schools serving the needs of every pupil."*

4.2 Our observations

The enquiry group recognises the value of all four capacities in curriculum for excellence, so that children are equipped with knowledge and skills they will require to flourish now and in the future. Developing life skills and key meta skills will serve them well in future life. However, we also recognise the mismatch between policies developed to measure success (narrow academic focus with the heaviest weighting on 'successful learner') and the agreed overarching purposes of curriculum for excellence. Current measurements have a limited field of focus and neither capture an accurate picture of attainment and achievement nor of the holistic development of every young person.

Government, politics, and media continue to place more weight on academic prowess over vocational and on knowledge over skills. A university pathway remains the "gold standard" with lesser value placed on other pathways and destinations. In looking forward to the needs of future society, workforce, economy and job opportunities, the status quo is unlikely to suffice. Attainment measures at present still value a traditional curriculum and has led to a lack of parity of esteem for many courses which are preparing young people well for future opportunities. Many are equivalent to, but not included in, the "5@ measures" which are taken by the media to rank schools and make judgments on school performance. An N5 C pass in Chemistry is seen as more valuable than the equivalent SCQF Level 5 Laboratory Science qualification. In primary, progress for all children is not as valued, as schools are grequired only to submit a snapshot of academic progress in literacy and numeracy, with no contextual information or progress over time considered.

Head Teachers recognise the value of measuring; however, measurements need to be proportionate, valid, reliable, and meaningful. They should not utilise so much staffing resource to collate and analyse, that it takes away from the key task of GIRFEC. It can appear that performance measurements for public assurance and judgment values pace of achievement much more than progress over time. What follows on then is that what the system measures is what shapes practice and what people [all stakeholders] end up valuing. The ACEL & Stretch metrics do not show true progress and impact of the all-round

development of children, including their actual progress in learning. We have asked ourselves the question if, similarly, inspection judgments and gradings place enough value on the holistic development of children and young people and of their acquisition of the four capacities. How strong are young people's portfolio of achievements, outlining skills and capacities as well as a range of achievements? Where levels of attainment are judged to be high, do these indicate high quality learning experiences for every young person and not just teaching to the test or memorising and rote learning being rewarded? Is there sufficient focus on high quality pathways and optimal destinations for every young person? Our thinking must be future proofed for the world in which our young people will live and work.

New knowledge

Through this collaborative enquiry process, we have engaged in informal networking and formal interviews - This includes meetings with government colleagues, educational researchers such as Munby and Priestly, members of the ICEA, BOCSH and ADES. We have conducted background reading of academic research, government policies and reports where appropriate. We looked outwards to understand where and how the voice of the head is being amplified for system gain through genuine inter-connectedness of research, policy, and practice.

In Finland, the voice of principals is often heard in the working groups of the Ministry and the National Agency of Education through the representatives of the Finnish Principals' Association. For example, this Association was in fact involved in formulating the 2021 Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government. The drafting of the report began in autumn 2019, when Government ministers visited schools and upper secondary and higher education institutions to discuss and consult on the current situation and development needs in education and research. Seminars and workshops were organised to seek solutions for responding to changes in the operating environment and supporting the preparation of the Report. Virtual brainstorming was set up to collect ideas for building a good future through education, training, and competence. More than four thousand responses were received. In late 2020 views on the draft Report were sought from a broad range of key stakeholders in education and research. This level of consultation is not unlike what has happened here in Scotland with the Education Reform reports and recommendations. However, where the Finnish Principals' Association was involved in the formulating of the policy, it remains to be seen the extent to which Head Teachers will be involved in decision-making around which reforms will be actioned and how this will happen.

In Singapore, education professionals are directly involved in the policy making process. Head Teachers (and indeed teachers at various levels) are consistently posted into Ministry of Education headquarters to draft policies and after some years back to school again to lead schools. In New Zealand, schools report directly to the Ministry of Education.

The Welsh government has a National Academy for Educational Leadership [NAEL] which is viewed as being in a critical and influential position within the middle tier between government and educational organisations. The NAEL is funded to have a thinking space and represent serving school leaders' voices. One of the strategic priorities for 2022-26 of the NAEL is to:

"Act as a thought leader; developing, articulating, and implementing a vision and strategy for educational leadership in Wales"

The NAEL has established within its function an Academy Associates Programme and is now on its 6th cohort of Academy Associates and over 90 Associates. The application to become an Associate states:

"An Associate will, among other things, have the opportunity to challenge and influence education policy through engagement with high level government officials."

Wales' bold approach to reform has included working in collaboration with systems worldwide, including many highly regarded academics, and has established a principle of co-construction. This culture of a flipped system, where practitioners influence the policy based on practical experience, facilitates ownership, eases implementation, and enhances sustainability. A Federate of Associates has now been formed to continue to work on issues that directly feed into Welsh Government Policy and thinking.

Recommendations/ Summary

- An all-level push to encourage the valuing of 4 capacities – skills and knowledge (HMIE/SG/ Local Authorities and schools) would prepare young people for future pathways and living, would be beneficial to the labour market and economy and would develop parity of esteem between vocation/ academic studies and pathways.

- True co-creation and collaboration between policy, research and practice experts across sectors and levels to develop policies with sufficient lead up and engagement timelines

- We feel strongly that beyond listening is required. We recommend earlier involvement of Head Teachers to help policy land more effectively for all in the different layers of the system – children, schools, and government – and to capture better the real progress and successes that is happening in schools across Scotland rather than allow soundbites of negativity and failure to become the norm.

- Have more education representatives on the groups which shape policy, built in as a systematic approach. For example, collaborate, consult, co-construct with groups already in existence, such as EiH stretch groups or consider setting up an Associate Group similar to Wales or to England's National Academy. Secondments could also be considered – one or two days a week to be involved in development work.

(Recognition of representation from colleagues in groups – those lacking in capacity within school who cannot come out of school, be involved. Financial implications, but funded time out would enable equitable participation from the profession).

- We need better interconnectedness between research, policy and practice. For example, data and sound information is certainly required to highlight progress and impact or otherwise and keep standards high. Had there been round the table development in the case of introducing stretch aims they could have been better received and offer more meaningful and accurate data and a more accurate and positive picture of actual attainment for all.

- Greater understanding of the impact of what we measure on children who undertake new, different, and often innovative pathways to acquire not only required standards but also the skills and knowledge for their future pathways.

- The Scottish Government's attainment measures should reflect the wider range of qualifications that young people are undertaking and are required for the modern workplace. The success of schools should not be restricted to one [albeit important] attainment measure (e.g. 5x Highers at A-C) for example, qualifications undertaken through the wider SCQF framework. Many of these courses prepare young people to develop necessary skills for emerging job opportunities but are not currently valued as much as traditional academic performance. Local Authorities still use 5@ comparisons which contributes to a problematic culture and tension with schools now actively looking to increase pathways to support a broader range of learner. The new qualifications need to prepare young people better for the knowledge and skills which they will require for success in the world in which they will live and work and for a future thriving economy. It is imperative that the mistake is not made of measuring what is incapable of delivering this. A knowledge/skills balance needs to be redressed but this must not be confused with making qualifications easier. There needs to be careful thought about what is to be assessed and how this will be done, and the profession needs to become more highly skilled and better equipped in assessing more effectively.

- We agree with Campbell and Harris "Call to Action" report and recommendations from the National Discussion (2023)

'A future education system should capitalise upon and harness the abilities, skills and talents of all children and young people in Scotland. It should break down the academic/ vocation divide, offer a broader set of assessment and qualification options and formally recognise and reward the achievement of all learners."

- Do all the "hands" on Scottish education and in government understand the impact on practice of what is measured? For example, where ACEL data shows targets are 'not achieved' any conclusions made from that have not captured the exceptional progress over time (in literacy and numeracy) in some schools and has failed to take the many different starting points into account. The assessment tail then wags the whole curriculum dog and shows an underpinning of inequitable measures used to judge success in Scottish schools and performance of young people. It may be tricky to employ more inclusive measures, but inclusion should mean inclusion and where learners achieve against the odds, they should not be slotted into a category of under-performance and failing standards. We feel there is a moral imperative to address this.

How has this Collaborative Enquiry influenced us?

- More equipped to nudge the system in interactions above, below, and across the education system.
- More in-depth knowledge of opportunities and challenges in system to benefit all children.
- Working across sectors and authorities enabled interconnectedness and understanding of similarities of challenge between the sectors, as well as recognising the differences
- Grasping the potential of full system gain and stronger positive narratives where research, policy and practice are allowed to collide, co-construct, become intertwined and effectively collaborate
- Increased our determination to uphold vision of 'wellbeing and learning'/ developing the four capacities as a driver and not be swayed by the 'academics obsession.,' while acknowledging the strength and importance of high levels of attainment.

Evolution of Profiling

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

The Evolution of Profiling in Scottish Education: How can equitable pupil profiling be implemented successfully to achieve the aims of Scotland's Curriculum?

This think piece examines the role of profiling in Scotland's Curriculum. This collaborative enquiry by four headteachers and one quality improvement officer from four local authorities found that profiling was a common theme in developing ownership of learning, transitions and skill development.

They reflected on own extensive experience, drew upon current national reports and engaged with co-design teams working in this area to develop their understanding of the key issues.

After analysing this information, the group made recommendations in 4 areas; participation, purpose, process and product. Key recommendations include centrality of children and young people to the process, the profile having value across the education system, importance of supporting teachers through career long professional learning and digital equity.

Participants

David McArthur HT, Lochend Community High School, Glasgow City Council
Elaine Milne, HT New Elgin Primary School, Moray Council
Ian Conaghan, HT St Gerard's Primary School, North Lanarkshire
Laura Harkins, Quality Improvement Officer, Digital Learning, West Lothian Council
Lesley McPhee, HT Eastfield Primary School, North Lanarkshire

Introduction to our Professional Learning Journey

When we originally met as a group, our common issue for discussion was around the fragmentation of the curriculum and the possible reasons why the vision of Scotland's Curriculum had not been achieved as intended. Specific concerns were voiced around what success looks like for our children and young people. For example, the four capacities are not weighted equally and success is often only measured using 'achievement of a level' data and SQA exam results. The four contexts for learning are also not equally weighted and the volume of content within curricular areas and subjects can overwhelm teachers. In addition to this, the recent focus on literacy and numeracy has resulted in a narrowed curriculum for young people.

We explored potential barriers to successful learning for our children and young people and these included the raising attainment agenda, inclusion, lack of empowerment, equity and transitions.

As a group, we agreed on the following positive change we would like to achieve:

- Increase in pupil engagement; participation and enjoyment;

- More opportunities for creativity and innovation;

- Freedom and autonomy allowing pupil ownership of learning;

- learning experiences which are relevant with a greater focus on interdisciplinary and project-based learning.

Recognising the sheer scale of these suggested changes, we looked for a common theme in each of them. Profiling was a feature which arose as we considered how we could capture the totality of a young person's learning journey, ensuring progress through effective transitions and skills development, so

they can take ownership of their own learning. Hence, we decided to focus on pupil profiling for our think piece.

In the realms of education, the concept of pupil profiling has been gaining significant traction in Scotland in recent years. Pupil profiling, a process which involves charting a young person's learning achievements, skills and strengths over time is at the forefront of educational change once again. This think piece delves into the significance of pupil profiling in the context of Scottish education, exploring how it can contribute to equity, inclusivity, and personalised learning for all students.

Part 1: What we know

Pupil profiling is not a new concept; it has been used in various educational systems around the world and was first mentioned in Building the Curriculum 3 (2008) and introduced in schools in the years thereafter. This was essentially a personal statement/report on their learning and achievements which was to be completed by P7 and S3 pupils.

Among the members of our group, we have all had varying degrees of experiences regarding profiling with none of us feeling we have found the ideal solution.

Elaine Milne, Headteacher

Having taught P7 at that time, it was a challenging concept for pupils to complete and the question around skills, ownership and the meaning of the profile was raised. Now as a Head Teacher, we use digital profiling (using Google Sites) from Primary 1 to Primary 7 and have been able to work together to create a progressive model of reflection. This begins being led by staff and gradually through modelling and scaffolding we now have a cohort of pupils that by P7 can independently complete their profile. This in turn can provide much rich information to secondary staff as part of transition in addition to traditional hand-over information such as ACEL data.
This system is not by any means perfect and issues around accessibility and equity for pupils with ASN is an area we are currently looking to improve.
Below is a link to the presentation shared with the Education Scotland co-design group in January 2023
Elgin Primary Digital Profiling Journey.pptx

Lesley McPhee, Headteacher

Pupil profiling has developed and emerged in various guises since first being cited in Curriculum for Excellence in 2008. However, in my experience none of the previous tried and tested formats have ever truly matched the concept or purpose completely, the closest being implemented in Early Years. Historically, numerous ideas and recording processes have been discontinued, mainly due to them not being valued by educators or learners and being seen as an onerous transition task or additional workload. It has never been seen as embedded within the teaching, learning and assessment process. Having a sound vision and shared understanding of the purpose of the profile (highlighting and sharing educational and personal achievements and successes) in line with Hayward recommendations and links with the introduction of a Scottish Diploma, is a welcomed route to hopefully provide a consistent and coherent profiling process which is widely recognised by all stakeholders including further and Higher education providers and employers.

David McArthur, Headteacher

My first understanding about profiling was to capture the young person's best achievements at a given point in time in their educational journey. There were two opportunities for a young person to capture their best moments in Primary 7 which was at the beginning in June 2012 and S3 pupils beginning in June 2013. This was in accordance with the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence Assessment guidance.

Young people captured their snapshot of their best achievements at a given point in time, by bringing together lots of different information about their learning. The young people supported by their teachers created their profile by drawing together lots of different evidence which were a range of profiling strategies used in schools at this time. Some examples were learning logs, E-portfolios, personal

learning diaries, pupil comments in reports and monitoring and tracking discussions, which young people used to gather information for their P7 and S3 profile.

Nowadays a profile should be a dynamic and holistic representation of a student's capabilities, growth and potential. We require to move beyond traditional academic measures and include assessments that capture young people's social, emotional and practical skill. Young people should be better prepared for the challenges that they will face in their careers and have the ability to apply knowledge. Young people require to embrace an understanding of academic concepts and recognise the relevance of digital skills in today's interconnected world.

As educators we require to move away from static snapshots and embrace a dynamic continuous updated profile that adapts to a young person's evolving skills and experiences over time. Ultimately the future profile should go beyond traditional academic transcripts to provide a rich, multifaceted representation of a young person's journey. This means preparing them not just for exams but for the challenges and opportunities of an ever-changing world.

Laura Harkins, Quality Improvement Officer

One of the most frequent support requests from schools over the past year has been for profiling advice, as they try to find an effective and manageable solution to digital profiling. My experience is that schools are trying to make use of the tools we have available to create a way to capture, share and celebrate student's learning, progress and achievements. However, there currently isn't a consistent platform which meets the needs of all stakeholders. A digital profile needs to be easily accessible to enable students, parents and staff to contribute, but be secure enough to protect the student data. Third party providers currently supply an online learning journal for children in early years through to Primary 3 until a national solution is agreed for this age group due to accessibility issues with the tools currently available in schools.   The advice we provide to schools is to maintain focus on the skill development required for effective pupil profiling and not become too focused on the technology itself. However, technology can be a barrier to engagement if the process is too cumbersome.   The most effective examples have been in schools where profiling is part of the day to day learning experiences and students have opportunities to reflect on their learning and contribute to their profiles in a meaningful way.

Part 2: What we learned

After considering our personal experiences of pupil profiling, we started to look outwards to find out what is already known, nationally and internationally. We started by reviewing the reports from the on-going education reform which is underway and engaged with reading and research in the following areas:

- The Purpose of Scotland's Curriculum

- Profiling in the Early Years

- Profiling development, Education Scotland

- The role of Skills Development Scotland

- The Risks of Digital Exclusion

The Purpose of Scotland's Curriculum

In her review 2023, Louise Hayward asked the question:

"What does it mean to be an education citizen in Scotland in the mid to late 21st Century"

"We need learners who have been given time and support to attain a wealth of knowledge, skills and experiences, and who are ready to take their place in the workplace, in society"

Peter Bain, Headteacher, Oban High, CCG School Leaders.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence was incepted in the early 2000s and realised across the country from 2010 with the aim of putting learners at the heart of education and to develop a society of successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. An ambitious aim which remains the core purpose of our education system. There are many debates about the reasons why this ambition has not yet been fully realised and the OECD report (June 2021) outlined 12 recommendations to adopt a more strategic approach to curriculum review and implementation to enable Scotland's CfE's vision and philosophy to be pursued.

For the purpose of this think piece, we will be focussing on the role of pupil profiling and how it can be used to successfully showcase a child's learning journey and skills. This has been referenced as a recommendation in the Hayward review.

A profile should be a celebration of a young persons' educational and personal achievements and successes as they develop skills from a rich curriculum offer. However, there are discussions to be had around the content. The fragmentation of the curriculum is outlined by Priestly who welcomes the discussions around curriculum making being addressed in Scottish Education following years of the curricular focus being somewhat eclipsed by the narrow focus on standards, outcomes and accountability. 'What does it mean to make a curriculum' (Priestly 2021).

Fullan also highlights through his paper, *'The Right Drivers for Whole System Success' (2021),* how a fragmented, academics-obsessed system is not going to produce a human society with care, empathy and civic awareness. His new drivers of Wellbeing and Learning, Social intelligence, Equality Investments and Systemness echo with the 4 capacities, the 4 contexts of learning and the metaskills 4.0 that we are looking for in the next generation of our society. For this to be fully understood and implemented by the teaching profession, significant training around profiling and its inclusion into learning, teaching and assessment will be essential.

Graham Donaldson recognised the need for professional learning for the teaching profession in his 2010 review: *'Its potential will only be realised if we fully support necessary professional learning for teachers as they rise to the challenges of its realisation'.*

Profiling in Early Years

Traditional data collection methods may not be the best possible approach, especially when working with young children. Education Scotland's Realising the Ambition focuses on the Reggio Emilia Approach and Alison Clark's mosaic research documentation and supports a wide range of means to capture learning and amplify children's voices, for example, through writing, photographs, artwork and video clips. These are then put together in a way that shows learning and makes sense to the child, their families and practitioners and feature as what Clark and Moss consider "individual tiles". It is then the practitioner's task to put these individual pieces together to form one big picture, just like many little tiles are formed into one big mosaic. This then creates a holistic profile following the child's learning journey which can be ultimately used to inform future learning and support effective transitions going forward.

We have much to learn from our early years colleagues regarding profiling achievements and should prove a sound foundation upon which to build a seamless continuum from early through primary and into secondary.

Profiling Development, Education Scotland

One of Education Scotland's Co-design Groups has been engaging with 28 Local Authorities on profiling with a brief as follows: To conduct co-design sessions with key My World of Work audiences to explore new features, including personalised dashboards and profiles that capture skills and achievements.

There were 5 key objectives of the group:

1. Create a prototype (SDS and Humanly undertaking currently)

2. Share current practice – contained in draft paper 'Profiling Learners' Achievements: an exploration by a national co-design group' (August 2023).

3. Engage with employers

4. Provide a selection of toolkits

5. Provide a national offer of professional learning

During a feedback session in November 2023, Derek Hawthorne from Skills Development Scotland conducted the provocation: 'How might you use this prototype to support learners' achievements and what do you need to make it work?'

Recommendations from the group were as follows:

- What is the purpose and value – this must be clear

- Profiling has to be about the process not the end product

- The tool for profiling must be equitable both in terms of digital equity and also accessibility for all children and young people to use

- What information can schools access and track?

- Could a young person extract different aspects for different purposes eg a part-time job in a fast food restaurant, compared with a university application?

- Can achievements be tagged to the 4 contexts or 4 capacities?

- Are we all using meta-skills 4.0 for consistency?

- Where is the verification? Does it require verification? If so, by whom?

Skills Development Scotland

The Hayward report has highlighted the importance of pupil profiling in schools advocating for a comprehensive approach to education from ages 5 to 18. One critical element in realising this vision is the integration of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) into the educational landscape. SDS has the potential to enhance and support pupil profiling ensuring a more well-rounded and tailored educational experience.

Firstly, SDS can play a pivotal role in identifying and nurturing individual talents. By collaborating with educators, SDS can implement assessments and tools that go beyond traditional academic metrics, encompassing a spectrum of skills such as critical thinking, creativity and interpersonal communication. This approach aligns with the Hayward Report's emphasis on recognising the diverse strengths of each student.

Moreover, SDS can facilitate the seamless transition from school to workforce by aligning skill development with career pathways. By engaging with industries and understanding their evolving needs, SDS can tailor educational programmes to equip students with practical skills required in the real world. This not only addresses the Hayward Report's call for increased vocational education but also ensures that students are well-prepared for the demands of the job market.

Furthermore, SDS can contribute to the enhancement of the education system's responsiveness to individual needs. Through the implementation of personalised learning plans, SDS can assist educators

in tailoring their methodologies to accommodate diverse learning styles. This not only fosters a more educational environment but also addresses the Hayward Report's recommendation for a flexible and adaptive approach.

Collaboration is key to the successful implementation of these strategies. SDS can work closely with educational institutions, parents, and students to create a symbolic relationship that maximises the benefits of skills development. By fostering a culture of continuous feedback and improvement, SDS can contribute to the ongoing refinement of pupil profiling processes, ensuring they remain relevant and effective.

In Conclusion, the integration of SDS into the educational framework aligns seamlessly with the Hayward's Report vision for comprehensive pupil profiling. By emphasising holistic skill development, aligning education with career pathways and promoting personalised learning, SDS can significantly enhance and support the realisation of the Hayward Report's recommendations ultimately fostering the holistic growth of students from ages 5 to 18.

The Risks of Digital Exclusion

One of the recommendations in the Hayward Review is to make better use of digital technologies for assessment and gathering evidence and it makes specific reference to collecting and presenting achievements within a digital learner profile. This recommendation has been highlighted by critics who predict that it will lead to digital exclusion. Preventing digital exclusion involves ensuring that individuals have access to, and proficiency in using digital tools and technologies. Our group considered this view and concluded that there are essential digital skills and capabilities which are necessary for addressing digital exclusion:

Pupil voice and involvement in the process: Enabling pupils to take the lead in their digital profiling empowers them to take ownership of their learning.

Personalised Learning: Students can create digital profiles which reflect their interests, strengths, and learning styles. This can help educators to tailor learning experiences to better suit individual needs and preferences.

Pedagogy: Pedagogical approaches aim to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities needed to navigate and manage their digital profiles in a responsible and informed manner.

Digital Literacy: Understanding basic computer operations, navigating the internet, using email, and using common software applications are fundamental skills.

Adaptability to Technology Changes: Keeping up with technological advancements and being adaptable to new tools and platforms is crucial to avoid becoming outdated.

Infrastructure and Resources: Having access to devices like computers, tablets, or smartphones, as well as reliable internet connectivity, is essential for participation in the digital world.

Digital Communication: Skills in communicating effectively through various digital mediums, such as email, social media, video conferencing, and messaging apps.

Cybersecurity Awareness: Understanding the importance of online safety, including knowledge about passwords, phishing, malware, and other cybersecurity threats.

Data Literacy: Basic understanding of how data is collected, analysed, and used, including concepts like data privacy and the importance of data protection.

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking: The ability to analyse issues, troubleshoot technical problems, and think critically about digital tools and information encountered online.

Inclusive Design and Accessibility: Understanding the importance of creating digital content and tools that are accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities.

Digital Rights and Ethics: Awareness of digital rights, online ethics, and responsible digital citizenship, including understanding the impact of digital actions on individuals and society.

Addressing digital exclusion requires not only equipping individuals with these skills but also ensuring equitable access to resources, curriculum approaches, and opportunities to enhance digital literacy skills.

Part 3: Recommendations

From what we have learned through this collaborative process, we have agreed the following recommendations:

Participation

- The young people have to be central to this process, enabling them to take increasing ownership of their learning. What systems are needed to implement this authentically? Profiling should be central to the learning, teaching and assessment process.

- To achieve consistency, profiling should be created at national level in partnership with assessment bodies so that all schools can access as part of an equitable process which supports transitions at all levels and between establishments.

- Pupil Involvement is essential to ensure authentic engagement and participation with profiling

Purpose

- The pupil profile should be valued by all stakeholders and professional bodies

- Ensure the core purpose is clear, agreed, understood and implemented consistently by all stakeholders.

- The profile should enable young people to capture their successes and achievements and reflect the totality of their received curriculum.

- Consider who is the audience at different points in the learning pathway (learners, parents, staff, employers, SQA, further education).

Process

- Embed pupil profiling within current educational systems of learning and teaching

- Teacher education and on-going professional learning has to align with reforms in education.

- Consider what is required to support the profiling process – leaders, what skills are needed, what will profiling be like at all levels?

Product

- Design an accessible profiling platform with equity at the core.

- Provide a modern assessment platform which enables learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and achievements.

- Schools, learners and teachers must have access to reliable high-quality technology and IT systems to ensure on-going access to digital profiles tools.

Conclusion

We must embed the heart of the curriculum, learning and teaching into profiling or profiling into the heart of learning and teaching if it is to be a meaningful and usable document which accurately reflects a young person's journey and leads smoothly to the next phase of their learning journey.

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[What does it mean to make a curriculum? - Professor Mark Priestly](#)

Count Us In

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

'Count us in!' Headteacher Voice: How can more headteachers be included in the formation and development of policy and scrutiny in the local and national contexts?

This think piece focuses the on the representation of school leaders at those levels in the system where decisions are made. The enquiry group argue without a diverse range of headteacher voices at 'the table' many children, young people and their families will continue to be marginalised. The enquiry group comprised six headteachers from a range of contexts.

The group held discussions with researchers, academics and senior council officers. Research, reports and policy documents, including the Empowerment Agenda were reviewed. This contributes to a range of perspectives; Poverty, Rural, Alternative provision and Scrutiny. The key question throughout is 'Where is the power?'

Recommendations to promote the inclusion and diversity of school leader voice are made in the following areas; scrutiny. voice and participation, influence and governance and relationships

Participants

Julie Journeaux – HT Carnegie Primary School, Halbeath Nursery, Fife Council
Anne O'Hagan – HT Pilrig Park School, City of Edinburgh Council
John Devine – HT Breadalbane Academy, Perth and Kinross Council.
Catherine Capanni – HT Lourdes Primary School, Glasgow City Council
Lucy Blake - Clachan Primary and Achahoish Primary, Argyll and Bute Council.
Clare Harker - St Albert's Primary School, Glasgow City Council

We are a group of experienced headteachers who came together to explore our shared interest in local and national education policy. During initial discussions it became clear that this interest centred round the lack of involvement of headteachers in shaping the Scottish education system. None of us felt, or continue to feel empowered or included in the decision making process at local or national level. This led to consideration of who does. Who holds the power? Whose voices are the loudest and how can we, as headteachers, become central within the education landscape?

Our team members come from very different schools; secondary, complex needs, high minority ethnic group, rural, middle class and the school with the highest number of children in poverty across Scotland. In considering the diversity of demographic in our schools our conversation moved towards the exclusion of our pupils in the wider narrative. If we, as headteachers, are not able to represent the experiences we have working with our communities then the children and families will continue to be marginalised. From the outset our aim is to come up with solutions that we believe will raise the voices and participation of headteachers with a view to improving meaningful collaboration between researchers, decision makers and practitioners.

Our first discussion took us to Inclusion and a consideration of what inclusion should look like. This was driven by the profile and demographic of children in our schools:

Our vision for Inclusion is:

- Creating an ethos of achievement for all schools

- Valuing a broad range of talents, abilities and achievements

- Countering conscious and unconscious discrimination that may prevent schools from thriving in Scotland

- Actively promoting understanding and a positive appreciation of the diversity of schools within Scotland

We considered the barriers to these and why we feel the way we continue to feel in terms of our and our pupils' representation at policy making level. As a group we had an acceptance that our piece was being shaped based on how we felt about ourselves and our schools with the evidence being mainly anecdotal from our experiences. However, further analysis of policies, committees and current favoured research revealed that the same names kept coming up and, while committees and working groups may have a headteacher representative, they do not have fair representation from this profession that carry all of the information and experience necessary to inform next steps.

An obvious example is how schools operated during covid. We opened our doors to children and families, working hands on and front facing whilst many of our colleagues had to observe our lived experience from home. There is continued impact of lockdown but the education conversation seems to have moved forward.

In sharing more it became clear that our commonalities included our enthusiasm for education and our single mindedness in providing the best of environments for the communities in our care. We did discuss the barriers and this led us back to lack of headteacher voice in the making and shaping of policy and scrutiny. If we were more involved then we believed that many of the policies and practices would be better.

We came up with a plan of individual action and three questions:

1. How can Headteachers have influence in how school improvement is measured

2. How can Headteachers have influence in how policy is shaped at local and national level

3. How can we ensure Headteachers are positioned centrally in all consultation, policy making and recruitment

Our actions included:

- interviews with a mixture of academics and senior officers on power and who calls the shots

- reading and research internationally on how systems are scrutinised

- scrutinising policy and research to identify contributors and their background

- revisiting the Headteacher empowerment agenda to identify where it went wrong

We believe there is strength in our collective voice but also in our individual thoughts and experiences and have outlined these below.

Given that our whole premise is our voice then the following contributions are our individual thoughts with our common thread.

To have someone who's got a strong individual voice that is allowed to be heard is quite increasingly rare. These people need to be cherished.

David Tennant

Revisiting the Headteacher Empowerment Agenda Six Years on

This is how the Scottish government set out the idea of headteacher empowerment at the time of the consultation:

We want to create a genuinely school and teacher-led system which is centred on the child, and where decisions that shape the education of our young people are made by those working with young people, their parents and communities.

The OECD identifies a clear relationship between school autonomy and performance… Giving headteachers more power to make important decisions will make a difference to the educational outcomes of the young people in their schools but will also help improve school education in Scotland as a whole.

Empowering Schools: A Consultation on Provisions for the Education (Scotland) Bill (Nov 2017)

What are key features of headteacher empowerment?

- Decisions made at school level in the light of local context.

- Collaboration across the system rather than 'top-down"

- A system in which headteacher expertise is drawn upon and developed

- Local/national policy tempered by engagement with school leaders

The role of the local authority will be to participate in the Regional Collaborative's work to provide the support and expertise that schools in the area need, rather than imposing local curricular policies and practices on schools.

Empowering Schools: A Consultation on Provisions for the Education (Scotland) Bill (Nov 2017)

Finding ways to develop school leaders was cited as a critical practice by all system leaders. Across the system several common themes stand out:

- Increasing opportunities for high-performing principals to take on leadership responsibilities outside their own school.

Capturing the Leadership Premium: How the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future.

Barber, Whelan, and Clark (2010)

- Structures which ensure meaningful opportunities for deep engagement.

- An open and collaborative culture.

[Headteachers] will have the opportunity to help shape the priorities for their Collaborative, and an important role in supporting improvement and the sharing of best practice and innovation in and between schools.

Empowering Schools: A Consultation on Provisions for the Education (Scotland) Bill (Nov 2017)

Some key questions on headteacher empowerment for the future:

- The Empowering Schools proposals sought to limit the micromanagement of schools by local authorities, by stressing the need for autonomy for headteachers, but did not address the risk of 'top-down' policymaking at Scottish Government level.

- Have the Regional Improvement Collaboratives delivered on the promise to involve headteachers in shaping their priorities at regional level?

- How do we create structures that allow for a range of headteachers, representing a diversity of educational provisions, to be involved in policy development at a national level?

- How do we create a culture that ensures and welcomes opportunities for upward challenge of policy direction?

- How do we create structures and a culture that militate against 'echo chamber' decision-making, in which policy leaders have limited exposure to genuine challenge by others, including HTs, within the system?

Poverty- How can we ensure the voices of those in poverty are heard

'While the roots of childhood poverty are fiercely debated and contested, they are all too often misrepresented in policy and media discourses.'

Professor Morag Treanor Child Poverty – Aspiring to Survive Feb 2020 Policy Press

Everyone should work in Govan. If you've not, how can you possibly imagine what true, entrenched poverty that affects every part of your physical and mental being looks like?

Having a lived experience of the impact of poverty in Govan for six years where the SIMD 1&2 was 96.8%, I have often asked why I haven't been asked about the effects of poverty and the solutions that I used to try and mitigate that in the school and ensure equity for all children. This involved use of PEF and a human centric approach where I was, at times, the only person working for the needs of the community.

There is not enough representation of Head Teachers who support families in poverty at national level. Not poverty of experience or poverty of aspiration but a knot in the pit of the stomach hungry, cold and desperate poverty. Not knowing how you are going to feed your family poverty. Whether to heat or eat poverty. Crying on the Head Teacher because there is no-one else poverty. The kind of poverty that almost all of us cannot imagine but that thousands of families in Scotland are living through and in with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Throughout the pandemic from the beginning of the first lockdown until the end of the second one, nine of our parents died; not one directly from COVID but cancer, heart attacks and strokes. These parents followed the rules and didn't want to bother the hospital or doctors. They stayed at home and I was the only professional who visited them as they lay dying. That effect of poverty cannot be mitigated.

What needs to be in place for learning to happen?

Maslow's hierarchy talks of the physiological needs that must be in place for a person to thrive as human being; heating, food and water, shelter, clothing and sleep. If one or more of these are missing or depleted the effects on the physical, emotional and mental health of a child already put them at a disadvantage. The child does not feel included and this effects their ability to grow.

Having witnessed this, I am fully committed to using PEF to ensure a basic equity level across the school in order to make all children feel included in all aspects of school life. This should therefore raise their self-esteem and allow them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens. Through a human centric strong values-based ethos rooted in sound morals of kindness and faith, parents and children feel welcomed and included in all aspects of school life and know that I will do everything I can for them regardless of how many toes I step on. The inclusion of my voice is about me representing the most disadvantaged and misrepresented group in society – the poor.

'The National Discussion responses concerning the features of human-centred educational improvement valuing and listing to people involved in the Scottish education system needs to be a central feature of all decisions and actions' and 'Education needs to include learning about all forms of diversity, discrimination, and disadvantage for children and young people and for education workers and

support staff, including attention to curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and to diversifying the workforce'. *All Learners in Scotland Matter*, Our National Discussion on Education May 2023

- Are the right questions being asked to the right people?

- Do the decision makers really understand what it means to be poor?

- How can I ensure that the Head Teachers who are on the national groups are representing my views? Why is it always the same groups who are asked? Who wants to know how I try to mitigate the effects of poverty? How do I get involved?

Rural Schools - An untapped wealth of professionals who are not included in the National Discussion.

In Scotland 40% of Primary and 20% of Secondary establishments are rated as Rural or Very Rural. In the 2021 figures, this was reported as 867 schools.

During discussion in Small School Network and in communication with Heads of Very Small Schools, Head Teachers felt their schools were unrepresented in National Policy and Frameworks.

Examples

The Scottish Attainment Challenge by its nature was not representative of small schools. Achieving a Level Data sets are too small to record trends and small data sets cannot be published.

Allocation of PEF funding- rural poverty was not taken into consideration as a marker of need

Postcodes are not a good measure of SIMD levels in rural communities as one whole island can have the same postcode but house people of widely varying need

HGiOS4 descriptors of learning and teaching environment not reflective of multi composite one teacher schools, not reflective of the role of a Small School Headship

We all need to be round the table in order to be included in system change. What are the barriers to HeadTeachers not being included?

- Teaching Heads and Shared Heads have no SMT and so cannot leave the building easily

- In one-teacher schools and shared headships Heads of establishment there is no one to delegate jobs to and so HTs are too busy with daily admin to focus on systemness and strategy

- Rural Scotland seen as fringes not centres of excellence

- Travel time to education events

- Teaching commitment

- Part time clerical staff

Head Teachers of Small and Rural schools report are not feeling motivated to put themselves forward as representatives on the National level because:

- Feeling undervalued- Job sizing means they are paid less, the current job sizing tool does not take into account primary shared headship

- Head Teachers wanting to move forward in their career are told – 'try taking on a bigger school' the role of the small school head not valued as a unique skill

So what can we do?

The role of Head Teacher to be valued equally across all settings. All Headteachers to be included in the National Discussion, policy and scrutiny

How?

Make inclusion of HTs compulsory as part of the Standards for Headship. This would mean after a period of 5 years in post, every Head Teacher will be included on an Associate Inspector List and will be expected to take on the role of Associate Inspector on a minimum of one occasion. Funding will be made available to cover cost of staffing and travel.

After a period of 5 years in post every Head Teacher will be included on Scottish Head Teacher Excellence List and will be chosen at random to take part in National Discussion, policy at a national level or any educational development where Head Teacher voice is required.

How does external scrutiny genuinely support school improvement by school leaders?

Scrutiny - 'What happened to Ruth must never be allowed to happen again. We remain determined that there should be radical change, and quickly.' (family of Ruth Perry, 2023)

Our think piece is essentially about inclusion and in this case, we need to consider how the design of our scrutiny process includes the voices of our school leaders and actively works towards being led by us. The feedback from headteachers in forums across Scotland at this time is that the voices of those leading schools needs to be listened to.

As a group we have considered how this process could be improved with key themes emerging:

- Could we adopt a more decentralised approach, involving all headteachers from the wide variety of school contexts across Scotland?

- How do we adapt the scrutiny system to focus on improvement rather than performance and take account of each school's unique context?

- How do we engage a wider range of professionals with differing perspectives rather that a group think model of likeminded 'experts'?

- How do we develop a system that supports schools to improve rather than judging them?

Our system often looks to international speakers who provide research-based theories on what systems look like elsewhere. But we are looking for the inclusion of the 'real life' experiences of HTs in Scotland who live and breathe Scottish education for at least 60 hours per week and who put their dedication towards their job above their own families.

Over 40 years ago, the late Psychologist Carl Rogers commented; *"Our educational system takes the view that the nature of the individual is such that he cannot be trusted. That he must be guided, instructed and controlled by those who are wise or higher in status"*. While this is in reference to the American system, the message strikes a cord. Ultimately this leads to a climate of fear and loss of control for those who give everything they have to an increasingly challenging job.

Proposals for consideration:

- Radically increase the number of headteachers sitting at the decision-making table

- Engage all experienced headteacher in the scrutiny process to allow a broader perspective and embed professional learning more coherently into the process

- Allow schools greater autonomy in what is measured and what evidence they provide. Let's see more co-constructed success criteria.

- Allow schools to be scrutinised by colleagues and education leaders who know the journey of the school on a more regular basis.

- Use a matrix to measure schools that highlights their progress, recognises their unique contexts/challenges and celebrates their achievements.

Children in alternative pathways - 'It is important that systems of accountability, not least inspection, support authorities and schools in delivering effective inclusive education.' Graeme Donaldson 'Count us in', 2002

It is hard to find the voice of children who have additional learning needs within the education narrative.

Recommendation 1 from Additional Support for Learning review: action plan - November 2022 update:

'Children and young people must be listened to and involved in all decision making relating to additional support for learning. Co-creation and collaboration with children, young people and their families will support more coherent, inclusive and all-encompassing policy making which improves implementation, impact and experience.'

Children with additional needs are left out of the education story. The capturing of ACEL data and the drive to close the poverty related attainment gap are two simple illustrations of this. During our discussions and the lived experience of headteachers of schools for children who have needs it is clear that these children are being further marginalised by the erosion of services, budget constraints and the fear of the difficult conversations that must happen.

Headteacher voice in this sector is almost silent. Headteachers who understand pupil profile, suitability of environment and workable demographics are not being consulted when pupils are place.
'Count us In: Success For All' 2002 was used to frame our discussion on the additional need sector. In all of the discussions our headteacher member could not find her children in document, policy, development or headlines. The trauma experienced during covid by all involved in the sector is apparent every day in schools. As a team we want to ensure equity of importance and voice to those headteachers who work with and represent our most vulnerable.

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." — Peter Drucker

Inclusion and Diversity - Who holds all the power? Who is calling the shots?

'There is great possibility in the margins of educational systems' Sanitago Rincon Gallardo

Are all of Scotland's children and families included in the policies and practices we work within? If we take Culturally Responsive Practice as an example we are, in 2023, still at the very beginnings of changing systemic assumptions and building racial literacy.

If we are to build a strong Scotland that can thrive and contribute internationally we must include the best of **all** of Scotland. Currently we crisis manage, responding to situations, new arrivals, new languages rather than being completely literate and prepared in a shifting population. As example of this is that

there is no doubt that having English as an Additional Language is problematised. There is minimal and tokenistic visibility in resourcing and assessment. Inclusion means that all voices are embedded and considered in **every** policy and at the table during all decision making.

Working within a school where almost all of the children are from a marginalised group requires a very simple decision. **You either change the children to fit in with the system or change the system to include the children.** With the decision to do the latter consideration must be given to how decisions are made, who these decisions are made for and by and who are the dominant voices within the decision-making process.

'The headteacher also plays a pivotal role within the broader children's services network. Headteachers work with and support their peers and other educational establishments and make significant contributions to policy development across their cluster, local authority, regional or national education systems. Headteachers proactively contribute to leadership for improvement at system level (authority, regional and national level). This includes the ability to work collaboratively and collegially, encouraging and seeking views from across the learning community – from colleagues, parents/carers and families, children and young people, partners in other schools, the local authority and regional settings.'

Standard for Headship, August 2021

Where is all of the power? In interviewing willing volunteers several points emerged as common themes:

- There is too much governance and too little research and analysis of the governance processes. Too many voices but not the right ones.

- There is no analysis of who is holding all of the power and where the power tensions are

- There is a disconnect between government and local authorities. Relationships need to be formed and strengthened with purposeful dialogue

- The same names taken from a very small pool have the loudest voices with very little representation from the headteacher cohort. An overrepresentation of academics and international contributors. This is mirrored at local authority level.

- No processes in place for Headteachers to contribute equitably

- Too much power in the scrutiny process.

Headteachers do have power in their own communities and their own context. However, as we have demonstrated, it takes courage to balance the demands of an exclusive external system with the learning and health and wellbeing needs of the communities we work for.

Conclusion

In silencing voices what genius are we missing. These are our recommendations:

Scrutiny:

- All headteachers should become automatically become associate assessors after five years and invited to be part of inspections teams

- Continued quality assurance of the inspection process to ensure all inspections are inclusive and supportive

Voice and participation

- Analysis of representation at local and national policy level and the subsequent development of fairer and more representation of headteachers at all levels. A percentage representation to be agreed.

- Headteachers are positioned centrally in all consultation, policy making and recruitment. The development of 'think tank' groups where there can be free and 'impolite' discussion on relevant education issues.

Influence

- Headteachers, as senior local authority leaders, are considered influential, expert and as such can see where their views are heard.

Governance and Relationships

- Streamlining of the governance process and building of relationships. All policy makers, education stakeholders should be linked to a headteacher mentor/school where they must seek to understand the lived and live experience of Headteachers

'We realise the importance of our voices only when they are silenced'

Malala Yousafazi

Head Teacher System Support Structures

Collaborative Enquiry Question:

If systemic structures that support Head Teachers are prioritised would there be a positive impact on recruitment and retention?

This think piece examines factors that have had a detrimental impact on headteacher recruitment and retention and makes recommendations on removing or reducing these. The collaboration involved three headteachers from different authorities.

Reflecting on their considerable experience as school leaders and referring to Scottish and international research they have identified 'burn-out inducting contexts' and the consequences of this on headteacher health and well-being. They have linked these contexts to issues of retention and recruitment.

A number of recommendations are made including culture, inspection, workflow, coaching and sense checking the impact of policy change on headteacher workload.

Participants

Helen James- HT Macduff Primary Aberdeenshire Council
Sinéad Lindsay- HT St Joseph's Primary Aberdeen City Council
Joanne Paton- HT Whitecrook Campus West Dunbartonshire Council

What do we know?

The lived experiences of current HT show that Senior Leadership Team members are spending increasing time at work (source AHDS survey). Anecdotally this is said to be due to expanding remits.

All teachers have a contracted working week of 35 hours.

HTs are working on average 56.6 hours per week.

DHTs are working on average 51.7 hours per week

PTs are working on average 49.7 hours per week

In the 2023 survey there were 288 members who reported working 60hrs or more in a typical working week.

What's in a remit?

How Good Is Our School?

GTCS Standards

Learning and Teaching (Class cover)

Monitoring and assessment

Behaviour Support

Supporting parents and caregivers

Data analysis

Health and Safety

Budgeting

Human Resources

Administration

Reporting

Additional Support Needs

Support for Social Work, CAMHS and NHS (Speech and Language, School Nurses etc)

Child Protection and Safeguarding

What is known?- UK and beyond

The following information has been taken from a paper by Kruse and Edge (2023) which analyses current literature which, "[discusses] individual and collective burnout, identifies contributing factors and explores impacts for each".

[Edge, K and Kruse, S. (2023), "Is it just me?- The organisational implications of individual and collective burnout in schools".](#) Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 61 No. 3, pp. 272-286.*

Education systems require HTs to...

- Meet accountability demands

- Increase attainment

- Lead school improvement

- Provide instructional leadership

- Be expert problem solvers

- Support and guide parents/caregivers

- Respond to student need, trauma and discipline

- Manage individual and collective compassion fatigue

Current education conditions can result in...

Kruse and Edge (2023) used a wide range of literature to identify the specific conditions which can, "contribute to an individual's exposure to burnout-inducing contexts."

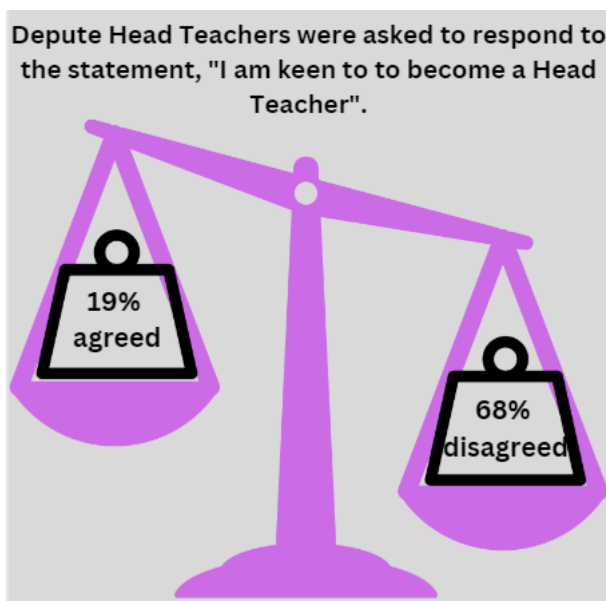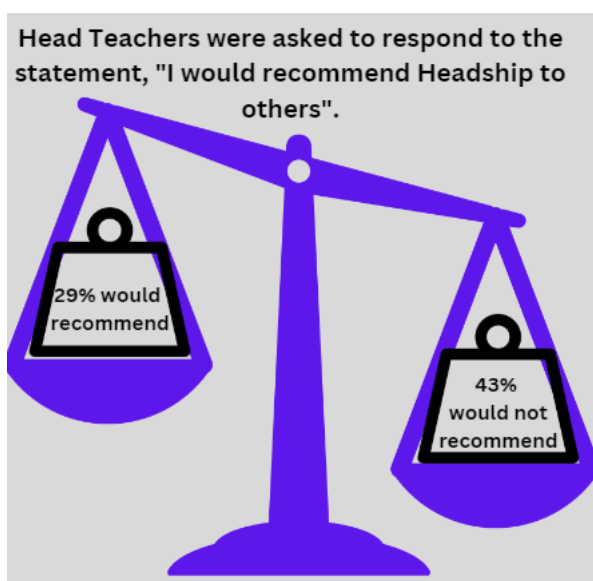The impacts of those conditions are identified here.

- Loss of teacher engagement and job satisfaction

- Increased leavers from the profession

- A decrease in pupil learning and attainment

- Vicarious and adversarial stress

- Decrease in emotional and physical resilience and overall wellbeing

- Lower concentration in teachers

- Irritability

- Aches and pains

- Absenteeism

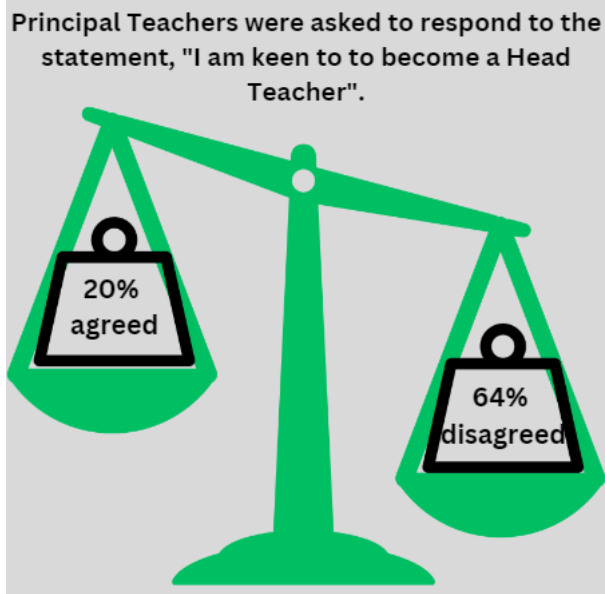- Diminished concentration, pessimism, inattention, recurrent / unwanted thoughts

What is known nationally?- AHDS

The AHDS* recently surveyed members and the following analysis provides insight into the consequences of the lived experiences of current members. This analysis provides a worrying indication of future issues facing the recruitment and retention of HTs.

The AHDS is a union exclusively for promoted posts in Scottish Primary Schools.

Head Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I would recommend Headship to others".

29% would recommend

43% would not recommend

Depute Head Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I am keen to to become a Head Teacher".

19% agreed

68% disagreed

Principal Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I am keen to to become a Head Teacher".

20% agreed

64% disagreed

The following Word Clouds were created using all written responses to the statements: "I would recommend Headship to others" and "I am keen to become a Head Teacher".

Common words and phrases throughout the responses were identified and quantified. The frequency of each word or phrase is shown through their sizing within the Word Cloud.

1 - Word frequency analysis of HT responses to workload survey.
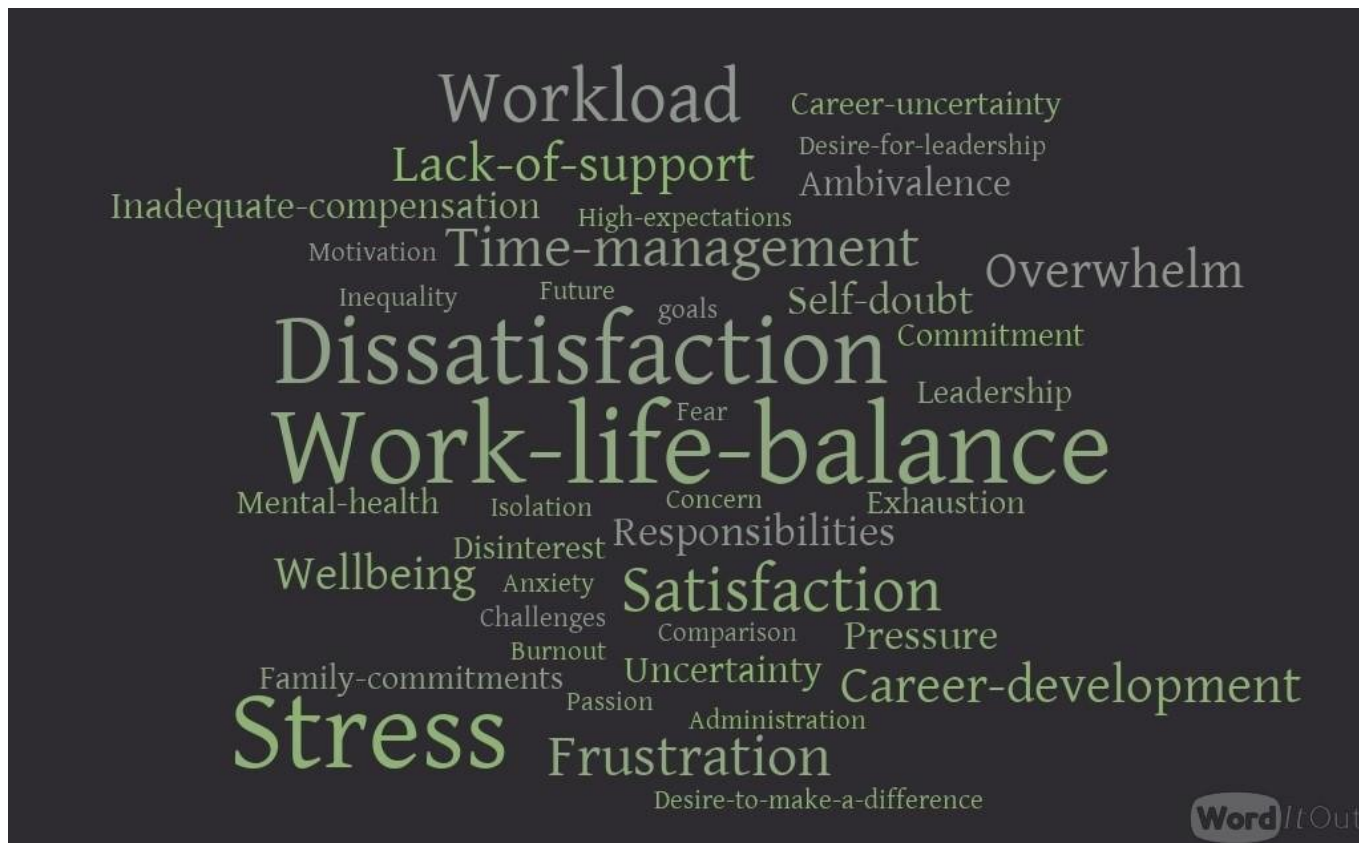
2   - Word frequency analysis of DHT/PT responses to workload survey.

The survey also asked "Over the last two years, have you considered leaving the profession/your role earlier than you had previously planned?" 75% of those who responded said yes.

The following comments reflect the overall anecdotal responses to this question:

"We are required to wear so many hats now and do the things that other agencies etc supported us with in the past. This job is all I ever wanted to do, I love it"

"but it is exhausting and in the current climate completely unsustainable and I know I have a max of about 5 years left before I am completely burnt out."

"Worried about burn out. I have around 20 more years and I'm not sure I can be a head for that long!"

"Workload, no balance, knowing that staffing is reducing when it is tricky now."

"Actively considering leaving profession in next two years to pursue alternative job route due to work pressures"

"Already planning for when I can afford to retire. Hopefully this will be earlier than when I can access my pension if I can manage it financially."

What is known nationally?- Recruitment and Retention Working Group

- More HTs leaving than the numbers completing Into Headship courses

- Only 19% of local authorities have more HTs remaining in post and achieving the standard for headship

- Between 2019 - 2021 inclusive - consistently higher numbers of HT left the post in the 36 - 59 age bracket than at any other time

What is known?- Locally

- Two Local Authorities provided information relating to HT and DHT resignations within the last 3 years.

- 12 DHTs and 14 HTs in 2 Local Authorities

- Our anecdotal experience of the pressures of the job have been borne out by this data from local authorities and AHDS. HT cannot continue in the work place as they are.

Recommendations based on this collaborative enquiry

- Study HT workflow to prioritise systemic changes which would benefit post holders.

- Cultural change seen as a priority and supported by all stakeholders.

- Education Scotland Inspection reports reflect positively on schools where workload and wellbeing are prioritised.

- Recruitment, enactment and retention should be a priority of any future policy development.

- Long-term programmes (not short-term interventions) grounded in realistic priorities.

- Coaching or supervision programmes could be considered as an initial priority for all HTs.

Further research used in this collaborative enquiry

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Impact of Behaviour

Collaborative Enquiry Question :

What is the impact on staff of working with learners who display behaviour that challenges?

This think piece was written with the aim of raising the awareness of school leaders to the impact that challenging behaviour has on teachers and support staff. It also examines practice that can reduce risk and support colleagues. This collaborative enquiry was carried out by three headteachers from different settings and authorities.

The enquiry developed from personal reflection including personal study in this area by HT and a prior collaboration involving two of the participants. They also drew upon previous research in the field. A questionnaire issued on the ASN Teacher forum was completed by over 170 participants in 3 days. This wealth of data is being analysed.

The think piece relates to existing research and early analysis of the questionnaire data. It identifies risks, prevalence, impact and information from colleagues and research on what can help.

Participants

Caroline Dunleavy - HT Thornwood primary School and Nursery Class, Glasgow City Council
Kay Hunter – HT Woodland View School ASN, East Dunbartonshire Council
Kerstine Speight – HT Tulloch Primary School, Perth and Kinross Council

Why?

As headteachers we see the impact that working with learners who display behaviour that challenges has on both teaching and support staff. This includes physical, mental and emotional impact which can be felt through staff teams, absences, illness and stress related conditions etc. as well as conditions such a compassion fatigue, burnout and vicarious trauma. As leaders it is important that we are aware of the potential risks that can affect staff in these situations and know what factors there are to help prevent these occurring.

The process

Having previously undertaken masters level study on compassion fatigue and burnout in an ASN sector and had worked with Caroline in comparable provisions. The research (due to Covid) was theoretical and paper based but now with the range of schools we had in our forum it gave the opportunity to look at the impact in a range of settings. We had information on the current research as well as anecdotal information from our settings but wanted to supplement this with 'real data' therefore a questionnaire was devised and shared on the ASN Teacher Forum. Data is still being collected but in the first three days over 170 responses were gathered. This data continues to be analysed to see how it can be related to the research and to look for mediating factors which can be implemented to support the mental, emotional and physical health of Scottish teachers working with children and young people who display behaviour that challenges.

The think piece has provoked an unexpectedly high response from teaching and support staff which would suggest there is a need for more work in this area, and due to the high level of response a much more detailed interrogation of the data will be needed to ensure that views are accurately and fairly represented across all sectors. There are pockets and areas of good practice across authorities but these are not consistent and there are examples of positive interventions used within health and social care which we could also learn from, therefore we need to continue to look at our data, gather best practice and offer advice accordingly.

THE IMPACT ON STAFF OF WORKING WITH LEARNERS WHO DISPLAY BEHAVIOUR THAT CHALLENGES

Working with learners who display behaviour that challenges in schools has been identified as being both physically and mentally exhausting for staff (Chang,2009). There is limited research on the impact this has on the school staff (Russo et al, 2020) however when faced with challenges around recruitment and retention of skilled staff, coupled with work related stress, emotional upset, and physical injury, it is of high importance to explore

Method

We looked at research gathered through ongoing work and linked this to questionnaire issued through Scotland-wide networks. We then interrogated this data for patterns and themes, and led professional dialogue on these.

Purpose

We wanted to explore the challenges faced when working with learners who display behaviour that challenges, the range of impact of this on staff, and potential methods of reducing this risk to staff wellbeing

What are the risks?

Compassion fatigue and burnout are identified as key areas of concern when working with learners that challenge. Figley (1985) identifies these as the "cost of caring" through ongoing exposure to trauma or emotional demands.

How prevalent is the problem?

Recent work undertaken by the EIS indicated
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Linking this to Riddell's view (Scot Gov 2017) that training in working with learners with an ASN was substandard both at and after teacher training leads to a combination where the problem could exist across all Scottish schools

What is the impact on staff?

We asked staff to identify how they felt about their roles
- 95 identified as feeling worn out because of their job
- 93% identified feeling sad or upset as a result of their job
- 78% identified losing sleep over worrying about a child
92% identified feeling a sense of helplessness associated with working with their learners

(sometimes, often or very often)

What is happening to staff?

Repondents were asked about challenging situations in their school
- over half reported being physically assaulted on a daily or weekly basis
- 68% reported physical aggression on a daily or weekly basis
- 57% reported verbal abuse on a daily or weekly basis
- 11% reported being involved in child protection concerns on a daily or weekly basis

What does research say would help?

Feeling supported by the whole school community (Zabel and Zabel 2002)
Increase in self-efficacy and confidence through appropriate training (Brittle,2020; Schoeps et al,2019)
Formal and informal support mechanisms (Kinman et al, 2011)
Appropriate resourcing including staffing (Bottiani et al, 2014)

What do staff say would help?

- Compassionate responses to staff by leadership team and other professionals
- Counselling, supervision or access to trained professionals to discuss the impact of working in these situations
- staffing ratios appropriate to the needs of the learners
- discussion around appropriateness of 'presumption of mainstream'
- looking at family support and interventions outwith the school AND MORE