

## **BELMAS LPD RIG MEETING**

**University of Warwick 9.11.17**

### **THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS**

#### **Roundtable Panel**

Professor Tony Bush, Educational Leadership, University of Nottingham

Ian Dewes NLE (also Ed D student at BCU), Executive Headteacher, Coventry

Dr Sue Robinson, former Executive Head, now Development Director, The Elliott Foundation

Claire Smith MA SLE, Assistant Principal Hartshill School, Midlands Academy Trust, Warwickshire

Andrew Warren NLE, Chair, Teaching Schools Council and Primary Executive Headteacher

Discussion of the broad 'state of play' topic for this RIG meeting, prompted by the five panel members, ranged across 5 key areas: Values, Quality, Roles, Structures and Accountabilities, and Funding. Implication for a future research agenda arising from this discussion are summarised in the final section.

#### **Values**

We were reminded early in the discussion that all LPD provision is underpinned by values and assumptions, whether or not they are made explicit. Stories from both the panel and the group were told of sponsors of international students expecting more authoritarian interpretations of leadership than their English tutors. In an English context, this raises questions of what we know about values and assumptions underpinning LPD provision from the host of providers now operating in a fragmented system. Are values being made explicit and open to examination in LPD provision? If so, what are they, and how are they being embedded in the content and approach of such provision? Put more directly and specifically, we would expect, in a taxpayer-funded state education system in a democratic society, that values of public service, critical enquiry and democratic process would inform such provision. And we would want to know where provision was most being compromised by narrow market values in a marketised system in order to challenge it.

#### **Quality**

In the absence of national guidance in a self-improving system, the issue of 'quality assurance' of LPD provision was referred to repeatedly as a concern of panel members during discussion. 'Quality' as a concept is, of course, both difficult and controversial. If we define it as intellectual challenge, then, as one panel member reminded us, The National College and HEI's were unable to reach agreement on twin tracking their programmes against Level 7/ Masters accreditation (despite many attempts). In the present, if we define it as 'what people want', then another panel member felt that Quality Assurance of facilitators of LPD should be left to 'market forces'.

So, in a system with no national guidance, who defines Quality, how is it defined and how is it assured? These are clearly big questions that, drawing on research thus far, need scaling down to specific audiences, with their own contexts, content, processes and outcomes. Before we quality assure (whoever the 'we' is) we need to know the what and how of the provision we are assuring. It would also be beneficial to know whether QA processes are already built into the provision at all stages of inputs ('recency', relevance and criticality of knowledge base), processes (innovation?) and outputs (variously defined).

This would seem to suggest that research opportunities for an audit of LPD providers at national level to see how combinations of providers are being used at regional, sub regional, school group and individual school levels. Such provision might include off the shelf private providers, National College materials, accredited Masters programmes, programmes co-constructed with strategic partners and programmes entirely home grown in schools. Approaching an audit with a quality agenda is of course a political act and would only succeed in benefiting the system if it was instigated by an impartial body such as the newly established Leadership Research Council and conducted in a collegial and collaborative spirit in the interests of improving the system.

### **Structures and Accountabilities**

Relationships between LPD provision and school structures and accountabilities were discussed in terms of staff retention. First, research shows that professional development is third on the list, below workload and bureaucracy, for keeping teachers in the profession, so it is important. Second, effective LPD, paid for by the school - that then leads to the promotion of school leaders who leave the school is a common dilemma for Headteachers. This led to wide ranging discussion of how issues of LPD and staff retention that are dealt with in overseas contexts, from regular LPD time allocation in continental Europe, to self-financing in the US, state identified funding in Singapore and 'bond' systems in various other countries.

Closer to home, there was some indication from a member of the panel representing a MAT that accountabilities were being introduced into contracts that kept staff working within MAT schools in return for LPD. The notion of 'entitlement' to LPD (within career long frameworks?) was raised more generally by a member of the panel, but how this would be managed and resourced was not pursued. Related to the audit of LPD providers idea in the section on quality, a key area for future research could be examining patterns of accountability for those in system leader roles for improving the coordination and coherence of LPD provision within and across various school structures.

### **Roles**

Various leadership roles were identified as priorities for future LPD research. These included: Middle leadership in MATs, and the System Leader roles of Executive Headship (Is this the NLE role? There was a conversation at one point about the limited number of Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (the SLEs, whose variability in deployment in the English context is now a common discussion in our RIG meetings). A fourth role of 'parateacher', Cover Supervisors who had received more 'teacher training' to

enable them to carry out a wider range of duties, was also mentioned in the context of one MAT (the critical bit of this new category is that these 'Paras' are all graduates, so that schools are able to say that they have a graduate only workforce). This category (and the on-going nature of wanting to develop teaching as a Level 7 Masterly Profession with PGCE credits usually being worth a third of an MA Ed) is under scrutiny at the moment because of the compulsory Levy on all employers (including school and LA budgets) to pay for the Government's new Apprenticeship scheme, which means that trainee teachers could potentially start as early as Level 3 (Sir Andrew Carter's notion of a TA being an NQT -4 years), it is currently not clear how these will pan out but UCET, CCoT, and this RIG are paying close attention...

This brings to mind past issues and controversies over wider workforce development in schools, an LPD field that, in times of austerity, this has not received much attention recently and which may be due for review. Regarding the system leader roles, one member of the panel, before beginning an Executive Headship programme had to make sense of a multiplicity of providers. Another member of the panel had been appointed as a SLE and then not deployed, which raised questions (again) about the perceived value of SLES by Head teachers, and the extent to which the SISS is currently working..

A member of the group who was an SLE told stories of deployments which suggested there was much scope for future professional development in the area. Another member of the group who had been conducting research into SLE development, observed that there was much potential in constructing research designs that engaged SLEs in interrogating their practice against consultancy research for this purpose.

### **Funding**

The national Teaching Schools Council (TSC) (Chaired by Andrew Warren, panel member) has £140m currently available for the Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) in conjunction with the 12 Opportunity Area funding, and the Teaching Leadership Investment Fund (TLIF) which if bid appropriately for can legitimately be spent on CPD and LPD, as well as on the Evaluation of deployed strategies. The Teaching Schools Council is looking for large projects on big themes (such as improving boy's literacy) with robust evidence of need, capacity and delivery across 8 regions and 820 teaching schools.

How and where this money is to be spent is as yet unclear. Sub-Regional Improvement Boards (SRIBs) consisting of the Regional School's Commissioner, a Regional Teaching School's Council Lead, Local Authority Director and DfE-link analyse data for approximately 3000 schools, outcomes inform sub-regional strategic goals which shape priority for funding rounds, open to MATs capable of leading on this [locally?]. Are schools simply receiving funding and spending it according to LPD need? Or are there more proactive movements afoot that are supporting innovation in LPD, through, for example, research engagement strategies and Joint Practice Development approaches? And, if so, what kinds of cost benefit analyses are scheduled or have already been carried out on these approaches?

## **Implications for a future LPD research agenda**

In summary, from the discussion emerged a number of potential LPD areas that might be considered in future agendas for LPD research:

- Middle leadership development in the context of MATs (particularly contrasting examples of where MATs really do, versus really don't, engage in SLE deployment? Lack of capacity in the system for Core [English & STEM staff] seems to be particularly impacting on this at the moment in the West Midlands).
- System leadership evaluation development, particularly in the areas of Executive Headship and Specialist Leaders of Education.
- Audits of LPD provision within and across school structures and roles and accountabilities of system leaders in improving the coordination and coherence of LPD within the interests of Quality Assurance (let alone Quality Enhancement!) in a self improving system.
- Studies of innovative approaches to LPD such as research engagement and Joint Practice Development, which till now have focussed on curriculum rather leadership development.

The LPD RIG of the consensus that is also important that LPD research receives a national lead from an impartial body such as the recently formed Foundation for Leadership in Education. The Foundation was set up by three professional associations (ASCL, NAHT and NGA) to fill the vacuum left by the closure of NCSL. The Foundation was launched in July 2016 and is chaired by Sir Michael Barber. The Foundation has established one sub-group, the Leadership Research Council, chaired by Philippa Cordingley. It includes several successful heads, and a number of academics, including Toby Greany and Tony Bush. Its most recent meeting included a contribution from Viviane Robinson. The Foundation has been unable to secure government funding, so its future is uncertain.

LPD RIG Co-Convenors

Deb Outhwaite, Paul Close, and Ann Kendrick

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