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**Symposium - Critical
Education Leadership
and Policy Scholarship:
Introducing a New
Research Methodology**

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 1

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New
Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 143

*Dr. Paul Armstrong (University of Manchester), Prof. Steve Courtney (University of Manchester), Dr. Amanda McKay (Griffith
University)*

Title: Introducing and Justifying the Need for a New Methodology for Researching Education Leadership and Policy.

Abstract: In this introductory paper, we justify our new methodology for researching education leadership and policy. We argue that for critical researchers, existing methodologies are unsuitable or insufficient. First, since most research in education leadership is functionalist, its methodologies are positivist. This makes them epistemologically unsuitable for critical researchers; unlike functionalists, critical researchers do not see social reality as extrinsic and objectively capturable, but as co-constructed with the researcher. Functionalist school-improvement researchers also tend to focus on leaders’ decontextualised behaviours and to see these as causally related to student attainment and universalisable. However, critical researchers are concerned with how present turbulent conditions, power structures and relations inflect leaders’ identities and practices in complex causal inter-relationships to produce rich, contextualised experiences of doing leadership. Critical education-leadership researchers do not have a dedicated methodology, but choose from e.g., ethnography, case study or policy scholarship. This latter is widely used because it contextualises the policy that co-constitutes leadership, but it has weaknesses. First, it focuses first on policy, so leadership may be under-theorised, undervalued or even suspect, always problematic, rather than simply problematised. This is conceptually and empirically limiting: a new critical education-leadership-oriented or enabling methodology is needed for increasingly turbulent times.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 2

Friday, 4th July - 15:40: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 146

Prof. Steve Courtney (University of Manchester)

Title: Adumbrating Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship (CELPS) as a New Research Methodology.

Abstract: In this paper, a new methodology is adumbrated for critical scholars who research education leadership. The methodology proposed here is called critical education leadership and policy scholarship (CELPS) and comprises six features: (1) it is epistemologically critical, that is, it focuses on context and power from a post-positivist perspective. (2) CELPS locates and works with education policy in diverse contexts, including the ideological, historical, political, discursive, socio-economic, axiological and cultural. (3) CELPS understands education leadership and policy as mutually constitutive. Policies structure the roles, practices and identities that are conjured as “leadership”, and “education leaders” enact and embody policy, contributing to the socio-discursive conditions in which new policies emerge and make sense. (4) CELPS enables the ontological deployment of the terms leader and leadership without committing to a project of reification. (5) CELPS requires the explicit theorisation and/or conceptualisation of its objects and assumptive architecture. (6) CELPS makes room for new or diverse approaches, agendas, methods, aims and foci. This paper makes an important contribution to the critical field’s capacity to address extant and emergent problems in education empirically as well as conceptually at a time of political and environmental turbulence.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 3

Friday, 4th July - 15:50: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New
Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 148

Dr. Bee Hughes (University of Manchester)

Title: Leading in a Crisis of Public Truth: How School Leaders are Navigating Lying in Politics.

Abstract: The leadership of schools in England is increasingly complex due in part to the role of the politics of education in setting the agenda for schools. This agenda is becoming increasingly problematised due to the absence of clear policy accompanied by various interpretations and assemblages of ideology, promulgated by those in power. Populist agendas operate. In this apparent crisis of truth-telling, where truth as politically constituted is factual and axiomatic, school leaders in ever increasing dark and turbulent times, are having to navigate knowledge in what constitutes the truth and, in some cases, resort to ways to expose untruths through action. Using Arendtian thinking to illumine how two leaders lead schools through their labour and work in actively seeking truth, enables thinking about the present issues of lying in politics. Framed methodologically by critical education leadership policy and scholarship, the paper adumbrates how school leaders must both understand and expose lying in politics through truth seeking. In doing so the two leaders not only adapt, translate and seek clarity but they actively seek truth where they become truth tellers of a different truth.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 4

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 149

Dr. Mark Innes (University of Manchester)

Title: From Policy Entrepreneur to Policy Receiver: How Multi-Academy Trusts Structure School Leaders as Policy Actors.

Abstract: This paper draws on an interview with a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDco) for a secondary school which is part of a multi-academy trust (MAT). This individual described a complex role requiring specialist skills, but she also disclosed that she was not consulted on policy decisions which she had strong reservations about regarding their inclusivity. A typology for thinking about policy work and policy actors in schools set out by Ball et al. (2011) is used to show that MAT structures can effectively bar school policy actors like the SENDco from being a ‘policy entrepreneur’ able to advocate for and interpret policy, rendering them a mere ‘receiver’ of policy. This analysis matters internationally because it demonstrates how a neoliberal turn in education aimed at building large, multi-school organisations which rely on powerful policy actors in the form of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Executive Headteachers to function, can render unthinkable the vital experience and expertise of education professionals acting at a local level. This occurs in ways that can serve to entrench inequalities, and is therefore an issue of social justice.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 6

Friday, 4th July - 16:10: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New
Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 151

Dr. Stephen Rayner (University of Manchester), Mrs. Sarah Bibi (University of Manchester)

Title: Establishing a Culture of Care: The Responsibility of Educational Leadership.

Abstract: This paper focuses on teachers’ well-being—specifically, how education policies designed to shape the dispositions and attitudes of school leaders and teachers may instead compromise teachers’ well-being and future employment in the profession. National and local policies may obstruct the establishment of a culture of care in schools, making it difficult for school leaders to prioritise their staff’s well-being. Our paper responds to recent research data that excessive numbers of education workers are experiencing poor mental health or work-related stress or are planning to leave the profession. Beginning by proposing an original conceptualisation of well-being, we report on an empirical project designed to bring new insights into the challenges facing school leadership, as articulated by teachers in England. Following an online, institution-wide questionnaire made available to all teaching staff, we conducted follow-up interviews. Our analysis brings new insights into individual well-being, well-being culture and the broader ethos of the institution. We consider how leadership practices are structured by policy, how they interplay with teachers’ practices and whether local policy decision-making is informed by a culture of care, making the institution a place where people want to work and to be.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 7

Friday, 4th July - 16:20: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 152

Dr. Karen Healey (University of Manchester)

Title: The Corporatisation of Parental Engagement in Multi-Academy Trust Leadership in Subordinated Communities: Thinking with Bourdieu’s Field Theory.

Abstract: In this paper, I think with Bourdieu’s field theory to critically examine how corporatised MAT governance has secured parental engagement as a corporate activity to acquire, regulate and naturalise parents, strengthening the position of the organisation and those leading and governing in multi-academy trusts. Positioned from a critical epistemological stance, this paper is framed methodologically by critical education leadership and policy scholarship (CELPS). I theorise using data generated in three multi-academy trusts located in subordinated communities to make both an empirical and theoretical contribution. I contribute theoretically to Bourdieu’s field theory by extending it to include how corporate practices diminish the agency of parents in dominated positions in the field, in that parents are acquired, regulated and naturalised to secure the field’s logic of practice. Secondly, I make an empirical contribution to the arguments concerned with the position and stance of actors in a corporatised field with the reframing of parental engagement as a corporate activity concerned with acquisition stability. In making these contributions, I offer a model to explain the corporatised framing of parental engagement as it seeks to acquire, regulate and naturalise the practices of parents in their engagement with the MAT and its schools.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 8

Friday, 4th July - 16:30: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New
Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 153

Dr. Craig Skerritt (University of Manchester)

Title: Senior Leaders Doing Policy Narration in Social Research Projects.

Abstract: This paper focuses on the narratives senior leaders produce for the outside world during social research projects—accounts which may not necessarily be accurate reflections of schools’ policies and which as critical researchers we need to be conscious of when generating, analysing, and presenting our data because what are often produced during these projects are spokesperson-like ‘official’ narratives.

The paper aligns with CELPS in multiple ways: it is epistemologically critical and opposed to positivism; it works with contextualised policy and views policy as being enacted in various ways, depending on the roles, interests and motives of actors such as senior leaders/policy narrators; it understands leadership and policy as mutually constitutive, with policy and how it is narrated being central to the work of senior leaders; it counts education leader(/ship) as an ontological category and explores the implications of leadership on social research projects; it is explicitly theorised and conceptualised by specifically making use of the concept of policy narration from policy enactment theory; and by reflecting on interview data, fieldnotes and memories in light of my previous work and, the paper is open to new and diverse ways of doing research.

Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology — Paper 9

Friday, 4th July - 16:40: Symposium - Critical Education Leadership and Policy Scholarship: Introducing a New Research Methodology (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 154

Dr. Claire Forbes (University of Manchester), Prof. Kirstin Kerr (University of Manchester)

Title: Responding to the Hyperlocal Turn in Education: What Role is there for Professionally Led Research-Practice Partnerships in Place-Based Policy Enactment?

Abstract: Research–practice partnerships (RPPs) are a growing movement in England and internationally, based on the rationale that effective education improvement requires the participation of diverse educational actors to create new forms of knowledge and feed these into local and hyperlocal practices. They are often situated within defined local or hyperlocal contexts and are well-positioned to enact national policy in research-informed, contextually relevant ways through the development of strong, long-lasting relationships, mutuality, trust, shared values and a shared commitment to local outcomes. This paper will present an illustrative case study of Riverside, a hyperlocal RPP in England. We use Engeström’s (2015) notion of expansive learning, where expertise is socially produced through negotiated knotworking (Engeström & Pyörälä, 2021) as a conceptual framework to argue that hyperlocal RPPs are well positioned to reimagine and enact policy in ways that creatively unite diverse stakeholders’ endogenous community knowledge, with researchers’ exogenous knowledge—both theoretical and empirical. This paper will also consider the challenges inherent within building and sustaining these partnerships. It thereby connects to CELPS methodology as deeply contextual, by exploring the complex role that situated socio-spatial relationships and knowledges might play in hyperlocal policy enactment, as well as what researchers might contribute to this.

**Symposium - The
Globalization of
Educational Leadership:
A Model of Reform and
Development through the
Lens of
University/District
Partnership**

Paper 1: The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Voices of University Faculty

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Symposium - The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Lens of University/District Partnership (Keats) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 162

Dr. Jami Berry (University of Georgia), Dr. Karen Bryant (University Georgia), Dr. Sylvia Robertson (University Otago)

This paper highlights the experiences and voices of Educational Leadership faculty members at a research university in the southeastern United States related to the globalization of educational leadership development. The authors are active in organizations that promote international collaboration, including the UCEA Center for the International Study of School Leadership and the International School Leadership Development Network. Through these networks, the university preparation program for educational leaders has expanded opportunities for candidates in graduate educational leadership programs to learn about leadership on a global scale. Graduate students have opportunities to co-author research studies with faculty and to present at international conferences. Technology makes it possible to interact with educators from around the world simultaneously in real time. The paper begins with a review of the research literature around collaborations for leadership development at the international level. Specific stories of partnership and collaboration will include a study tour hosted by the university that included a delegation of visiting educational leaders from Egypt and the experience of hosting a visiting international faculty colleague from New Zealand. School district partners were instrumental in both cases, welcoming international visitors into schools. Strong partnerships were essential to the success of both projects.

Paper 2: The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Voices of K-12 Superintendents

Friday, 4th July - 15:45: Symposium - The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Lens of University/District Partnership (Keats) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 163

*Dr. Mitch Young (University of Georgia/Forsyth County Public Schools), Dr. Carrie Booher (Social Circle City Schools),
Ms. Cathy Hardin (Gwinnett County Public Schools)*

Partnerships with K-12 school districts are an integral component of effective educator preparation programs in the United States. This paper delves more deeply into collaborations that foster global awareness and understanding among educational leadership candidates and current school leaders. The paper begins with a review of the scholarly literature related to effective partnerships between school districts and university educator preparation programs. Superintendents from three school districts in the southeastern United States will share recommended leadership strategies to promote global understanding and international connections as they lead school districts with increasingly international populations. The superintendents, who are the Chief Executive Officers of school districts, then detail their experiences in providing international colleagues with a deeper understanding of how districts leverage professional learning communities, explicit instruction, and parent engagement to drive student achievement. They continue by sharing insights into how collaboration with university partners plays a pivotal role in preparing and supporting school leaders and educators in a way that aligns with broader educational goals.

Paper 3: The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Voices of Student Participants

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Symposium - The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Lens of University/District Partnership (Keats) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 164

Ms. Shani Jackson (University of Georgia), Ms. Tifferney Dodd (University of Georgia), Ms. Tamra King (University of Georgia)

This paper explores the experiences of students in one educational leadership and administration program in the United States as they engaged in explicit collaborative opportunities with individuals connected to school, district, and national leadership in Egypt, Hong Kong, Mexico, and New Zealand. The paper begins with an overview of the scholarly literature centered on the globalization of schools in the United States and the impact of these shifting contexts on school and district leaders. Using a qualitative case study design, it continues with a description of how one educational leadership and administration program expanded its academic offerings beyond a localized context through the voices of student authors. This expansion included specific experiences for students to connect with leaders throughout the globe via joint research opportunities, visits from international leaders and scholars, presentations at international conferences, and co-constructing research with faculty members engaged in international initiatives. The paper closes with recommendations from the student authors related to each type of experience and how to best integrate specific components of globalization into university preparation programs in addition to suggestions for enhancing these opportunities for future students.

Paper 4: The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Lens of University/District Partnership

Friday, 4th July - 16:15: Symposium - The Globalization of Educational Leadership: A Model of Reform and Development through the Lens of University/District Partnership (Keats) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 165

Ms. Pam Pajerski (University of Georgia), Mr. Nathan Gerrells (University of Georgia), Dr. Chandra Walker (Gwinnett County Public Schools)

The importance of K-12 district/university partnerships to authentic leadership preparation has been well-documented in the scholarly literature. However, in a post-COVID context where schools are progressively serving more diverse populations and where the teaching force is increasingly coming from a plethora of professional backgrounds and educational paths, these partnerships are even more crucial to building and sustaining both teacher and leader pipelines. This paper begins with an overview of the scholarly literature related to K-12 district/university partnerships and the emerging trends in the teacher workforce in the United States and globally. It continues by examining the impacts these shifts will continue to have on the leader workforce related to the need for continuous improvement tied to preparation, comprehensive ongoing support, and plans for sustainability and succession planning within the overall educator pipeline. The paper closes with explicit recommendations related to how districts and universities can work together to leverage the learnings from the aforementioned components to continuously review, revise, and reflect on their practices related to building and sustaining the teacher and leader pipeline. Each component is included in an effort to offer a model for more robust partnerships specifically related to teacher and leader support systems.

**Symposium - Learning to
Lead for Equality and
Democracy: Nordic
Perspectives on School
Leader Preparation and
Development**

Learning to lead for equality and democracy: Nordic perspectives on school leader preparation and development – an Icelandic perspective

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Symposium - Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 170

Dr. Sigríður Margrét Sigurðardóttir (University of Akureyri)

In Iceland, all principals must have a teaching licence and an additional degree in administration or teaching experience and capacities in areas such as school development, student learning and well-being, communication, human resource management, and financial administration. There is no mandated school leadership program, but since the 1990s, universities have offered diplomas or master's programs focusing on professional and democratic leadership and professional and school development. While not legally required, advanced education is often essential for securing principal positions. However, formal education in school leadership is largely considered a private responsibility of school principals. Research in Iceland indicates that a master's program in school administration and leadership provides principals with theoretical knowledge that builds their confidence and strengthens their capacity for leading change.

I argue that there is a lack of understanding and policy focus on the importance of formal preparation and continuous education in school leadership and administration. This threatens school leaders' ability to lead their schools and to preserve a focus on professional and democratic leadership within school leaders' education that helps equip them with the necessary skills to meet complex demands in modern school settings while supporting core values of equity and inclusive decision-making.

Learning to lead for equality and democracy: Nordic perspectives on school leader preparation and development – a Danish perspective

Friday, 4th July - 15:45: Symposium - Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 171

Dr. Ronni Laursen (Aalborg University)

In Denmark, there are no national programs dedicated to school leader education, yet there is an implicit expectation that school leaders possess formal leadership training. This expectation reflects a tension that has grown since Denmark’s participation in PISA in 2001, with increasing demands on school leaders. These demands include outcome-based accountability measures, such as achieving satisfactory student test scores, meeting standards in national well-being surveys, and managing tight budgets, all reinforced by numerous policy guidelines and directives from the Ministry of Education. In contrast, the Danish Education Act emphasizes the importance of democratic values in schooling practices.

Despite some autonomy within national legislation, research shows that outcome-based pressures often drive school leaders to prioritize performance metrics over other educational values. I theorize that school leaders with a strong academic and pedagogical foundation are better positioned to use their autonomy to foster a democratic school culture, aligning with broader educational goals beyond performance indicators. I argue that formal education and continuous professional development are crucial for school leaders to critically reflect on how to balance accountability demands while preserving democratic practices in schools. Thus, enabling leaders to not only comply with legislation but also cultivate critical, engaged citizens.

Learning to lead for equality and democracy: Nordic perspectives on school leader preparation and development – a Norwegian perspective.

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Symposium - Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 219

Dr. Mari-Ana Jones (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

NB This is the Norwegian contribution to the symposium: Learning to lead for equality and democracy: Nordic perspectives on school leader preparation and development

The Norwegian government funds a national education programme for school leaders which is equivalent to the first year of a master's degree. Although non-obligatory, the programme is oversubscribed; evaluation reports during the past fifteen years indicate that participants are extremely satisfied and feel more competent to lead schools as a result of the programme. The content of the national education programme consists of a number of broad themes and priorities, defined by the Directorate of Education and Training in Norway and delivered variously by the seven selected universities. Leading learning communities and leading school development are central to the programme and there is a clear intention that school leaders will use the programme as a springboard for further development. Furthermore, the programme description states that participants' needs and interests will be taken into account in the delivery of the programme. There is little trace of a language of accountability; standards and outcomes are not mentioned in the programme description. It can, therefore, be convincingly argued that school leaders in Norway are offered leadership preparation and development which underpin Nordic values.

However, school leaders struggle to balance the aims and intentions of a democratic education with increased accountability demands at local level. For example, the introduction of school choice at high school level (ages 16-19) has led to greater interest in results as a perceived indication of quality. Practices such as performance-related pay and benchmarking have become more prevalent at municipality-level, whilst at the same time there are fewer resources available for inclusive learning environments. The challenge for leadership preparation and development in Norway is not the incorporation of invasive strategies of standards-based leadership, but to advocate more explicitly for equitable and democratic leadership practices, thus enabling school leaders to resist calls for increased monitoring and regulation and concentrate on leading in line with Norwegian values.

Learning to lead for equality and democracy: Nordic perspectives on school leader preparation and development – a Swedish perspective

Friday, 4th July - 16:15: Symposium - Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 235

Dr. Susanne Sahlin (Mid Sweden University)

In Sweden, there is currently a national principal training programme (NPTP) provided by universities. Established in various forms since the mid-1970s, it is now seen as institutionalised. As part of state governance, it is responsive to current changes. The programme is in-service and mandatory for new principals since 2010. The purpose of the training is to provide principals with knowledge of the requirements outlined in governing documents for preschools and schools and to develop their roles as leaders to ensure quality in educational activities. The NPTP integrates theoretical perspectives with local contextual examples to support principals' professionalisation, who express satisfaction, particularly with the collaborative opportunities for discussing school issues and networking.

Principals must be lifelong learners to keep pace with an ever-changing educational environment and society. A national professional programme has been proposed for preschool teachers, teachers, and principals, though principal professional development has not yet been prioritised. The challenge for leadership preparation and development in Sweden is how we prepare principals in a changing world with new knowledge needs, meaning evolving demands on principals. Democracy is more crucial than ever. Which knowledge, capabilities, and values will be critical for principals, and thus for their training and professional learning?

Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development

Friday, 4th July - 16:30: Symposium - Learning to Lead for Equality and Democracy: Nordic Perspectives on School Leader Preparation and Development (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 236

Dr. Susanne Sahlin (Mid Sweden University)

In 2020, Michael Uljens asked: “*Will we really be able to educate morally, politically, socially and culturally aware and reflective individuals, cultural beings and citizens by such a performative and instrumentalist paradigm?*”. This question has arguably become even more pertinent in recent times. Divisive neoliberal strategies and priorities are hardly going to enable schools to meet current and future complex challenges. If we are to develop schools in which children can thrive and grow as democratic citizens, we need school leaders who are critically reflexive, not who conform unquestioningly. The ways in which we design and deliver school leadership preparation and development are, therefore, crucial.

This symposium examines school leaders’ preparation and professional development in four Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Denmark), focusing on the ways in which equity and democracy are promoted and espoused. We draw attention to these values as essential in schools as they attend to the growing challenges of populism, inequity, conflict and the climate crisis. Leading schools in these difficult times requires adaptability, autonomy, inclusivity and bravery, and this symposium explores how Nordic school leaders are equipped with these qualities, inviting comparisons with other contexts.

Whilst there is much to be learned from the Nordic region about school leadership preparation and professional development, there are also, however, competing discourses (Moos et al, 2020). Historically, Nordic educational systems have emphasised democracy and equity. These values are at the core of Nordic societies and welfarism. Yet these values are continually under threat from forces of marketisation, accountability and consumerism (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021). Governments in the Nordic region advocate for improved outcomes in education which have more to do with competition than equity, whilst at the same time being bound by the democratic principles and values which Nordic peoples hold most dear (Hellevik & Hellevik, 2017). In this symposium, we critically consider how we as researchers and educators of school leaders work to challenge the dominance of neoliberalism, whilst at the same time supporting school leaders to navigate this reality.

This symposium contributes to alternative perspectives on school leadership preparation which challenge the global dominance of marketisation, consumerism and accountability. Each researcher will contribute from a national perspective, providing insights into the current state, critically reflecting on opportunities and challenges, and problematising future directions of school leadership in the Nordic countries. By bringing together researchers and educators from the Nordic region, we will facilitate discussion across contexts about how school leadership preparation and development can make a positive and important contribution to promoting values of equity and democracy. The symposium intends to identify strategies and approaches to strengthen school leaders’ ability to advocate for equality and democracy.

Parallel Session 1

Crises and traumas in Educational Leadership: Is the field a Minefield and/or a Transformational Territory ?

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Parallel Session 1 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 194

Dr. Deniz Orucu (University of Nottingham)

Much has been written about crises and traumas in schools with a link to educational leadership, with researchers seeking to explicate the reasons and various means of dealing with them. Threats that put strain on education systems and schools mirror those of wider societies: political disruption, wars, economic crises, unemployment, climate crises, disasters, forced migration patterns and the recent Covid 19 pandemic (Arar et al., 2021; Gurr&Drysedale, 2020; Mazurkiewicz &Fischer, 2021). In this conceptual study , I aim to critically explore issues and challenges concerning how educational leadership responds to crises and traumas experienced by staff, students and communities through a critical discussion. Based on the fact that if/how educational leadership could help to ease the crises and toxic trauma is a matter of debate globally, the presentation will deal with the frequently encountered challenges and leadership responses as well as the potential and limitations of the field of EMAL(Educational Management Administration and Leadership) in addressing the crises. Given the stark contrasts in the levels of trauma and crises that education systems face internationally (Mazurkiewicz &Fischer, 2021), various cases and examples from different geographies including the UK will be discussed from a social justice lens. This is based on my argument that educational leadership has the capacity to ease the crises *to an extent*. However, based on my ontological and epistemological stance, I further claim that it has its limitations under the hideous and tragic circumstances of many countries around the world. To support this argument, the potential and limitations of the field of EMAL as an academic discipline (Courtney et al., 2021) in this regard will be explicated during the session . Further, if/how alternative forms of educational leadership, particularly social justice and culturally responsive approaches, could assist school leaders in crises and traumatic situations will be explicated.

Arar, K., Örüçü, D., & Wilkinson, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Neoliberalism and education systems in conflict: Exploring challenges across the globe*. Routledge.

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Transforming Educational Leadership Development: Addressing Cultures of Incivility and Fostering Human Flourishing in Higher Education

Friday, 4th July - 15:45: Parallel Session 1 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 209

Dr. Niamh Hickey (University of Limerick), Prof. Patricia Mannix-McNamara (University of Limerick), Prof. Lynn Bosetti (University of British Columbia), Prof. Sabre Cherkowski (University of British Columbia)

The nature of education and society has shifted dramatically in recent decades, with turbulence from the COVID-19 pandemic altering the way in which we work and engage with one another, reshaping what it means to be an educational leader (Harris and Jones, 2020) and a leader educator. This change has fostered an accelerated move toward fast-paced, efficiency-driven work environments, which often leave little room for meaningful engagement. The increased focus on well-being and human flourishing in education is a natural response to these challenges. By human flourishing, we refer to the experiences of positive emotions, engagement, meaningful relationships, achievement, and purpose (Seligman, 2011), which is the optimal state for students, teachers, and leaders. However, significant obstacles remain despite the growing emphasis on well-being and human flourishing. While some university classrooms may offer holistic approaches to intellectual engagement, the reality for others is that the space to engage at the humanistic level is hindered by performance metrics, workload, and bottom-line cost pressures.

Neoliberalism, with its market-driven values such as institutional rankings, performance metrics, and a focus on enrollment and satisfaction (Bosetti & Heffernan, 2021a; Hodgins & Mannix McNamara, 2021b), has intensified a culture of competition that is in direct conflict with the collaborative, caring communities that leadership preparation programmes strive to foster. This environment creates a paradox, as future educational leaders are trained in contexts where values of competition, individualism, and productivity may take precedence over collaboration, empathy, and shared purpose. Consequently, students in these programmes may inadvertently internalise these values, impacting their development as leaders and shaping their leadership practices in schools. This presentation stems from an ongoing collaborative effort to reimagine leadership preparation in a way that fosters care, connection, and human flourishing. Anchored in the belief that educators and aspiring leaders alike must experience environments rooted in democratic, caring learning communities, we argue that leadership preparation must model the very culture we hope to instill in future school leaders.

To address these challenges, we propose a transformative approach to leadership education that centers on well-being, empathy, and community. This reimagining requires a cultural shift within higher education, moving away from the current emphasis on competition and productivity toward learning environments grounded in care and connection. By prioritising these values in leadership development programmes, we can create spaces that not only support the well-being of educators but also model the type of leadership that fosters human flourishing in schools. In doing so, we can help future school leaders cultivate environments in which both students and educators thrive.

We invite conference participants to engage in a collective reimagining of how we can transform academic cultures into communities of learning that support well-being, collaboration, and the development of educational leaders committed to making a difference in the lives of their students and colleagues (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018). This session will provide an opportunity for reflection and discussion on how to shift our leadership development programmes and higher education environments to better support the flourishing of both educators and future leaders.

Reshaping Educational Leadership in Turbulent Times: Students’ Perspectives on Decolonial Leadership Approaches in Nigeria and South Africa

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Parallel Session 1 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 270

Dr. Oyeyemi Jekayinfa (University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria), Dr. Aminat Aburime (University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria), Dr. Olatunji Jekayinfa (National Mathematical Centre, Abuja), Dr. Abubakar Saidu (University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria), Mr. Akinola Odeniyi (University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom)

Educational leadership plays a critical role in driving institutional transformation, yet persistent colonial legacies and complex gender norms continue to shape leadership dynamics within African higher education. This study examines how Nigerian and South African students perceive the role of gender in educational leadership within a decolonial framework. By adopting a transformative paradigm, this research explores students’ insights into how decolonial principles can inform leadership approaches that promote cultural sensitivity, equity, and inclusivity across educational institutions. It also considers how historical power imbalances continue to influence leadership accessibility and decision-making processes, shaping institutional governance and policy development significantly.

Grounded in a qualitative methodology, the study employs Participatory Action Research (PAR) to center the voices of students from selected universities in Nigeria and South Africa. By drawing on postcolonial, feminist, and comparative frameworks, the study seeks to explore how intersecting factors such as nationality, gender, and institutional culture inform students’ interactions with educational leaders and their perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the research investigates how students interpret the impact of colonial and gendered power structures within academic settings. Additionally, it examines students’ perspectives on the reforms required to make leadership and governance structures more inclusive, representative, and reflective of the diverse socio-cultural contexts of postcolonial Africa.

The findings highlight how students perceive existing leadership models as both a continuation of and resistance to colonial frameworks. Students point out specific barriers to achieving decolonial leadership, such as rigid hierarchical structures, Eurocentric curricula, and decision-making practices that fail to account for the unique cultural identities within Nigerian and South African contexts. In response, students advocate for reform strategies that prioritize decolonial practices, including localized curricula development, inclusive governance structures, and leadership approaches that emphasize gender equity and cultural inclusivity. They further emphasize the need for participatory leadership models that incorporate student engagement in institutional decision-making.

By aligning with the conference theme, “Turbulence, Reform, and Development in Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration,” this study situates students as critical agents in the dialogue on decolonial leadership. It underscores the importance of student perspectives in catalyzing transformative reforms that address historical injustices and foster resilient educational systems capable of responding to the complexities of contemporary African society. The research also highlights the role of mentorship and community-driven leadership models in fostering a more inclusive academic environment.

The implications of this research are far-reaching, particularly for policymakers and educational leaders seeking to cultivate equitable and culturally responsive institutions. By centering student voices, this study illuminates actionable pathways to decolonial leadership that account for Africa’s rich cultural diversity and historical complexities. Recommendations include establishing policies that mandate gender equity in leadership roles, fostering governance practices rooted in local traditions, and implementing culturally relevant curricula that challenge Eurocentric standards. Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to a more just and inclusive

global educational system by showcasing the transformative potential of decolonial leadership in the African context, offering a good model that can be adapted to other postcolonial societies facing similar challenges.

“Principals expediate leading on professional learning and development through mentoring to enable educators’ self-directed learning in diverse settings including rural public schools”

Friday, 4th July - 16:15: Parallel Session 1 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 295

Dr. Lizana Oberholzer (University of Wolverhampton), Prof. Rajkumar Mestry (University of Johannesburg)

The aim of this study was to investigate how mentoring could be used by principles in schools in South Africa, to develop school leaders and teachers to promote self-directed learning within classrooms to drive school improvement. Hattie (2012) highlights that self-directed learning, where learners can identify their own targets, and understand how they need to drive their own learning, has significant impact on learner outcomes. However, the challenges are, that principals need to enable their staff to consistently apply this approach to learning more consistently to ensure that learners move forward. Mentoring is identified as one of the most underused interventions to drive school improvement by the inspectorate in the United Kingdom (Ofsted, 2019), and the researchers aimed to test this claim in South Africa, by developing principals’ mentorship to professionally develop their teams, to enable learner achievement in South African schools and diverse settings. This project provides opportunities to skill principals up on how to draw on mentoring, which is defined as a learning relationship, with school leaders and staff to refine their practices to facilitate self-directed learning in diverse schools and classrooms.

This interpretivist qualitative case study, aimed to outline how mentoring as an intervention could be used to develop staff and impact positively on learner outcomes. The study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with principals, school leaders and teachers (Cohen et al, 2018). All participants engaged in the study consented to contribute to the work, and all the necessary ethical requirements were in place to move the study forward (BERA, 2024). In addition, interview transcripts were developed, approved for accuracy by participants, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts through the use of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 6 phase model. The data suggested that mentoring made a significant impact on educators’ self-directed learning practices and as a result, learners’ outcome.

Reference:

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Parallel Session 1

Beyond Surface Level: the Challenge of Embedding Catholic Values in an English Secondary School During Covid-19

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Parallel Session 1 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 168

Dr. Beth Holmes (University of Derby)

This research examines how Catholic values influenced one English secondary state school's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with particular focus on the challenges of embedding values beyond surface level and managing tensions between values linked to pastoral care and performance demands. This case-study draws on interview data from 13 staff members and document analysis collected during the first lockdown (March-July 2020), the study reveals both opportunities and challenges in maintaining distinctive religious values during a time of crisis. Key findings highlight the importance of collaborative approaches to values implementation, the impact of leadership modelling on values permeation, and how crisis situations can catalyse more authentic expression of institutional values. The research has implications for school leaders seeking to embed values meaningfully while navigating competing priorities in challenging circumstances.

School leaders navigating the ‘turbulence’ between inclusion and excellence in Rwandan and South African schools: a Change Laboratory intervention

Friday, 4th July - 15:45: Parallel Session 1 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 24

Dr. Douglas Andrews (University of the Witwatersrand)

There is growing literature on utilizing Cultural-Historical-Activity-Theory’s Change Laboratory (CL) interventions for professional development to manage complex value-based problems that school leaders need to address. This paper reports findings from a follow-up study into how CL interventions, support school leaders in navigating the tensions between the demands for academic excellence and an agenda for inclusion and explores the utility of this approach in addressing the vexing dilemma of this tension. The follow-up study explores whether CL interventions are applicable in wider geographical and socio-economic contexts, with leaders from South African and Rwandan schools, in response to the critique that an agenda for inclusion is only attainable and sustainable in high-performing schools in middle and upper-income communities.

The agendas of inclusion and academic excellence co-exist but the motives that inform each agenda differ. My findings show that at the microsystem level of the classroom, teachers must make pedagogical choices where these agendas appear to compete, and they have the power to enact micro-inclusions and micro-exclusions. At the macrosystem level, wider societal, economic, and policy considerations jostle to shape school activity and outcomes. In schools where there are high levels of educational attainment, there is a good basis for expanding the provision to be inclusive. Inclusion, it seems, is viewed as a ‘luxury’ that could be entertained. However, in school contexts of poor academic attainment, the drive is to respond to community and departmental pressures and rapidly improve standards and outcomes through the development of an academically competitive environment, possibly at the expense of those who might compromise the school’s results.

Many Global North countries integrated the inclusion agenda into already well-functioning education systems. South Africa and Rwanda are second-generation adopters of inclusive education, and eagerly responded to the vision of inclusive education set out in the Salamanca Statement of 1994. However, South Africa and Rwanda, like many low and middle-income countries, come to inclusion, not after the establishment of a generally well-functioning system, rather, inclusion comes concurrently with the need to build such a system after the ravages of colonialism, and in the face of global economic competitiveness and inequality.

Considering this backdrop, n=22 principals, from successful inclusionary schools in South Africa and Rwanda, were interviewed to determine what strategies they were implementing when navigating excellence and inclusion. The data was analyzed using a cartesian plane of general and restricted complexity on the Y axis, and a greater or lesser understanding of pedagogical responsiveness on the X axis. Five key areas/strategies were identified as critical to leading inclusionary schools. These included a general understanding of complexity, greater pedagogical responsiveness, robust networking capability, collaborative teacher professional development, and a willingness to make structural and operational changes in the school. These strategies were utilized as the ‘mirror’ surface in CL workshops with another n=20 principals purposively selected because they were struggling to develop and sustain inclusionary schools. Findings show, that through collaborative CL interventions, the principals identified contextually relevant leadership strategies to advance inclusive practices while simultaneously advancing the demands for academic excellence.

National Professional Qualifications: approved knowledge and post-neoliberal oligarchic sovereignty

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Parallel Session 1 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 100

Dr. Janet Hetherington (University of Staffordshire)

This research explores the Conservative government's policy of educational leadership development in its current iteration and illuminate the relationship between its flagship National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and Gunter's (2016) construct of knowledge production in the field of educational leadership.

The NPQs are a framework of state-approved and regulated, government-designed standards of middle and senior educational leadership. Lead providers tender bids to the DfE to 'translate' the frameworks into curricula, which lead providers and delivery partners deliver. To secure quality and fidelity, to programmes, they are inspected by Ofsted. NPQs are state-promoted and regulated standards of recognition.

'Post-neoliberalism' is distanced from a commitment to market forces, whilst acquiring tendencies aligned with greater direct control, authoritarianism (Davies and Gane, 2021) and anti-democratic practices. Gunter (2023) postulates these tendencies are fundamental to oligarchic sovereignty; government by 'club' elites.

Knowledge production conceptualises four key constructs: knowledge, knowings, knowers and knowledgeabilities (Gunter, 2016). The rules and processes of selection, translation, recontextualization; the transference of knowledge to policy and pedagogy (Gunter and Mills, 2016) and models of leadership practice, are key technologies of the knowers. Gunter's (2016) construction of knowledge production is political and sociological illuminating the interplay of power, agency and structure in the promotion of particular interests, agendas and choices. Equally significant are the government's, the 'oligarchic club sovereignty', philosophies, experiences and practices, determining knowledge claims and policy-scope positioning (Gunter, 2023).

This research explores these complex interplays empirically and conceptually through an analysis of policies and practices associated with the delivery of NPQs through Gunter's (2016) knowledge production conceptual framework. The research was carried out with 6 lead providers. Data was generated by documentary analysis, for example, DfE guidance, programme specifications, and was triangulated with semi-structured interviews with 9 leaders within the lead providers' organisation. The sampling strategy was purposeful; individuals were identified for their organisational role and willingness to participate.

Findings indicate that Knowledge within the DfE framework and curricula from NPQ lead providers is a body determined as worth Knowing by the DfE and a trusted body of Knowers. Knowers are knowledge actors trusted to select, and deem knowable Knowledge and Knowings through their creation, sustainability and challenge (Gunter, 2016). This Knowledge has been identified, selected and verified by trusted Knowers, who are required to deem knowable Knowledge from DfE-approved directories of knowledge. The selected Knowledge is limited and exclusionary, and the use of types of Knowledge and ways of Knowing, and the Knowledgeabilities of those who are recognised as trustworthy knowers proactively narrows and silences a wide-ranging body of knowledge from other sources. Finally, Knowledgeabilities are how Knowers frame Knowledge and Knowings to illustrate, emphasise and set direction to the knowledge claims being made (Gunter, 2016). Subsequently, fidelity to knowledge claims and knowledgeabilities is fundamental and subject to significant external scrutiny during writing and delivery, some Knowers experiencing 'doublethink' in pursuit of fidelity, and is reproduced during activation of new Knowers. Ultimately, this is a form of governing by knowledge production.

School principals’ social justice leadership for school mindfulness and teachers’ commitment: the mediating role of teachers’ collective efficacy

Friday, 4th July - 16:15: Parallel Session 1 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 189

Dr. Mowafaq Qadach (Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education)

The role of school principals as leaders for social justice is vital in fostering inclusive, equitable, and supportive environments that promote the holistic development of students, teachers, and communities. School Principal Social Justice Leadership (SPSJL) emphasizes fairness, diversity, and inclusivity, shaping school climates that nurture teachers’ well-being and commitment. This study utilized Feng-I and Wei-Lin’s (2019) scale to measure SPSJL across three dimensions: justice, care, and critique. Research highlights the positive influence of social justice leadership on school dynamics, benefiting students and staff (Brown, 2021; Khalifa et al., 2018). However, the pathways through which SPSJL impacts outcomes such as organizational mindfulness and teachers’ commitment remain underexplored.

Grounded in the upper echelon theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which posits that leadership characteristics affect organizational outcomes through the promotion of processes, this study examines how SPSJL influences school mindfulness and teachers’ affective and continuance commitment indirectly. Therefore, I argue that SPSJL affects these outcomes indirectly through Teachers’ Collective Efficacy (TCE).

TCE refers to teachers’ shared belief in their collective ability to positively impact instructional practices and student discipline (Goddard et al., 2015). Elevated levels of TCE correlate with improved collaboration, teaching strategies, and teachers’ commitment (Goddard et al., 2020). To measure TCE, this study adapted Schechter and Tschannen-Moran’s (2006) questionnaire, which focuses on two dimensions: collective efficacy for instructional strategies and for student discipline.

Organizational mindfulness, defined by collective awareness, adaptability, and attentiveness to evolving demands, is critical for resilience and minimizing disruptions in educational ecosystems (Da’as, 2023; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Mindful schools enable teachers to engage actively, remain committed, and achieve greater satisfaction (Braun et al., 2019; Öngel, Tabancali, & Korumaz, 2022). This study employed a 12-item scale developed by Shani and Somech (2019), based on Hoy et al. (2006), to measure school mindfulness through five subscales: focus on mistakes and failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise.

Teachers’ commitment includes normative commitment (TNC), continuance commitment (TCC), and affective commitment (TAC). TCC reflects teachers’ inclination to remain in schools due to the perceived costs of leaving, while TAC captures their emotional connection to the school (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Both forms of commitment foster environments where educators are deeply engaged with their roles. This study adapted Meyer and Allen’s (1997) questionnaire to measure TCC and TAC.

This study links SPSJL with TCE and explores TCE’s impact on TCC, TAC, and school mindfulness. The model tested SPSJL’s indirect effects on these outcomes via TCE. Data from 91 administrators and 1,076 teachers in Arab society schools in Israel were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). Results show SPSJL positively predicts TCE, which significantly predicted TCC, TAC, and school mindfulness. Finally, TCE fully mediates between SPSJL and school mindfulness TCC and TAC.

This study enriches the literature on social justice leadership by demonstrating its indirect influence on school mindfulness and teachers’ commitment through TCE. These findings have important implications for policy-makers and educational leaders, highlighting the necessity of socially just leadership practices to enhance school effectiveness.

Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times

Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 195

Dr. Charles Webber (Mount Royal University)

The proposed symposium will introduce the second stage of an international study which is intended to facilitate deeper understandings of the role of classroom-based teacher leaders in increasingly politicized and rapidly changing contexts.

The presenters will utilize the “four common hallmarks of teacher leadership” (Nguyen et al., 2020, p. 67) which include (1) teacher leaders as influencers, (2) professional practices based on collaboration and trust, (3) leadership within classrooms and throughout school communities, and (4) a focus on teaching, learning, and school effectiveness.

Each of four papers will address the study’s primary research question: *How do teacher leaders understand and enact influence in the political and social dimensions of their societies?* Perspectives will be shared from the contexts of Spain, Romania, Mexico, and Canada. Each paper will begin with an overview of recent culturally specific research related to teacher leadership, followed by a summary of localized contextual factors that support or impede the manifestation of Nguyen et al.’s four hallmarks. The authors will close their papers with a framework that positions the generalized findings of recent research in juxtaposition to on-the-ground opportunities and tensions associated with the influence of teacher leaders.

Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times – Paper 1

Friday, 4th July - 15:42: Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times (Noblesse) - Symposium -
Abstract ID: 197

Dr. Mireia Tintore (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya), Dr. Gloria Gratacós (Universidad Villanueva)

State of the Art on Teacher Leadership in Spain

Research shows that teacher quality is the most crucial factor impacting student outcomes and is affected by leadership effectiveness (Hanushek, 2003; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2017; Hattie, 2017; Rivkin et al., 2005). Consequently, having teacher leaders in schools is a factor of undoubted interest. Teacher leadership is a topic that attracts increasing attention in Spain, as shown by the most recent reviews on the subject (Tintoré et al., 2023). This paper aims to update, with data from 2022, the state of the art on teacher leadership in Spain and relate it to Spanish educational policies. Spain is immersed in the process of evolution from a bureaucratic and management-focused school administration model to a model of pedagogical leadership that should count on teacher leaders' actions and promote their existence. The paper analyzes some contextual elements that can facilitate or hinder teacher leadership in Spain, such as the initial and ongoing teacher training systems (Castro & Egado, 2024), the latest OECD recommendations for Spain regarding teachers (OECD, 2023), and the need to reform the profession.

Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times – Paper 2

Friday, 4th July - 15:54: Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 198

Dr. Elena Seghedin (Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza), Dr. Ovidiu Gavrilovici (Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza)

Searching for a Framework for Educational Policies on Teacher Leadership in Romania

Starting from the main theoretical ideas, objectives and research instruments of the first stage of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership*, we describe the social, economic, educational, and cultural elements of Romanian post-communism society, which have policy and pedagogical implications for teachers’ professional development.

Our study design included activities that started in July 2023 by involving graduate students, enrolled in the *Policy and Management in Education* master’s degree program, in research assistant roles during the steps of translation and adaptation of the data-gathering instruments (questionnaires, interviews, and oral history narrative techniques). The next actions began in October 2023 and addressed the ISTL II research goal and its new research questions, which focus on teachers’ professional identity and on the social and political dimensions of current Romanian society.

Our qualitative analyses are in progress, but our early findings allow us to present the highlights of an emerging teacher leadership professionalism model that represents an important set of professional competences, pro-social attitudes, and moral values. Our findings relate to attributes of teacher leadership—engagement and commitment correlated with trust, autonomy, reflectivity, and decision-making processes, for example—and could form the basis for useful recommendations for a Romanian school effectiveness development strategy.

Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times – Paper 3

Friday, 4th July - 16:06: Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times (Noblesse) - Symposium -
Abstract ID: 199

Dr. Edith Cisneros-Cohernour (Autonomous University of Yucatan)

Teacher Leadership in the Sociocultural Context of Mexico

This paper uses the four hallmarks of teacher leadership (Nguyen et al, 2020) to examine what factors of the sociocultural context of Mexico contribute or impede teacher leadership development and implementation in Mexico. The first part of the paper provides an overview of the Mexican educational system, its main actors and characteristics of teacher preparation and development programs, as well as the implications of Mexican educational policies on teacher preparation and evaluation.

Next, we will present the findings of our systematic review on the research on teacher leadership in México. Some preliminary results of this review indicate that recent research is beginning to highlight traits of leadership such as collaboration and reflexivity, although some studies refer to distributive leadership as simply soliciting the collaboration of teachers and parents by school authorities. Despite this, some new studies explore teacher leadership closer to the way it is conceptualized by the broader international research community. More research is needed on the study of teacher leadership in Mexico, given current policies and challenges.

Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times – Paper 4

Friday, 4th July - 16:18: Symposium - Teacher Leadership in Turbulent Times (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 200

Dr. Charles Webber (Mount Royal University), Dr. Janet Okoko (University of Saskatchewan)

Grounding Teacher Leadership in the Politics of the Canadian Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta

Researchers studying teacher leadership in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta highlighted the importance of organizational support, workplace relationships, and teacher-principal collaboration (Heim & Marshall, 2022; Stelmach et al., 2024). Similarly important is the need for school-based leaders to serve as allies to populations such as Indigenous peoples (Jutras & Wallin, 2024) and to respond to wide-ranging cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity (Okoko, 2019). Others (Brown & Friesen, 2023) articulate the urgency for school leaders to focus on student learning, professional learning, and research-informed practices.

The significance of studies of teacher leadership cannot be overstated. They inform policy makers and practitioners. Nonetheless, the politics of education in Alberta and Saskatchewan introduce a steady stream of tensions (Webber, 2023). Both provinces currently deal with intense public debates about sex education and pronoun usage in schools (CBC, 2023). Politicized dialogue continues about inadequate use of age-appropriate curriculum that reflects Indigenous knowledge (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Record-breaking population growth challenges the capacity of schools to accommodate learners and to hire teachers quickly enough (CBC, 2024). These and other complexities—funding, demands for school choice, public resistance to new curricula—challenge successful manifestation of the hallmarks of teacher leadership.

Parallel Session 1

Being and Becoming an Irish Primary School Principal: A View from the Inside

Friday, 4th July - 15:30: Parallel Session 1 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 225

Mrs. Anna Mai Rooney (Oide)

The prevailing negative perception of the role of the Primary school Principal in Ireland set against the articulation by so many Principals of their love and enjoyment of the role was the impetus for this study. The reasons why Irish Principals appreciate their position and celebrate their achievements are explored while the benefits and the challenges of Principalship are highlighted. The study also examines the many complexities of the role and how both the benefits and challenges can be influenced by effective distributed or collaborative leadership. With a view to understanding primary Principalship further, the circumstances of recruitment to the role are interrogated to determine the various pathways to the role and the emotional development of the person of the leader is explored with respect to their evolution as Principal. The manner in which recruitment and emotional development influences the benefits and challenges of Principalship is investigated as is the essential nature of quality professional learning and bespoke system supports.

Framed in an interpretivist paradigm, this empirical study used fifteen semi-structured interviews to collect the data which was analysed using thematic analysis to generate the research findings. The findings suggest that the benefits of Principalship are not sufficiently showcased or explored in either the literature or the professional learning provided for Principals. Secondly, the complexities of the role are well documented, and the findings advocate for the potential of effective distributed leadership with a focus on the development of the person of the leader to manage the complexities. Through the lens of the newly appointed Principal's position, the data indicates the much-misunderstood circumstances of recruitment and their potential to significantly influence the benefits and challenges of the role. Additionally, the data points to the importance of bespoke professional learning to address the emotional development of the Principal and to guide and support newly appointed Principals, particularly in relation to shadowing, hand-over and practice-based programmes. Finally, this study's findings highlight a significant level of disconnect between the Irish education system and the day-to-day lived experiences of primary Principals. Accordingly, the study suggests that the time is right for practitioners, policy makers, and educational stakeholders to listen more carefully to each other and to work more collaboratively together to ensure that the role of the Irish primary Principal is made more sustainable, more rewarding and, ultimately, more attractive to aspiring leaders.

Leading Through Backlash: Exploring School Leaders’ Decision-making Experiences While Navigating Competing Stakeholder Demands on Socially Contentious Issues

Friday, 4th July - 15:45: Parallel Session 1 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 33

Dr. George Panayiotou (University of Colorado Denver), Dr. Julia Mahfouz (University of Colorado Denver), Ms. Rana Bassaj (University of Colorado, Denver), Mr. Anastasi Sharp (University of Colorado, Denver), Mr. Andrew Dutch (University of Colorado, Denver)

School leaders increasingly face backlash from diverse stakeholder groups who pressure them to either accept or reject educational ideas and policies surrounding socially divisive issues (Blosser et al., 2023). Public controversies from divergent perspectives on topics, such as including contested critical theories in curricula or adopting progressive identity constructs in school settings, heighten educational leaders’ exposure to backlash from stakeholders that either support or reject these interventions. Despite the significance of these challenges, few empirical studies capture the decision-making experiences of school leaders and their leadership behaviors as they navigate these high-pressure environments (Mahfouz, 2020; Mutch, 2015; Reynolds & O-Dwyer, 2008). The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to uncover behaviors that contribute to effective leadership during periods of backlash; second, to explore the various factors that influence leaders’ ability to manage these challenging situations; and third, to provide a practical leadership framework to support school leaders as they navigate the complexities of stakeholder backlash. This study aligns with the conference themes of “leadership for equity, diversity, and social justice,” “Leadership Development,” and “leadership in times of crisis.” Centering on this problem of practice, the study addresses two research questions: (1) How do school leaders interpret effective leadership behaviors for managing conflicting stakeholder demands for socially contentious issues? and (2) What factors contribute to the varying effectiveness of school leaders in managing stakeholder backlash on socially contentious issues?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study employs Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) to provide a theoretical framework for exploring effective leadership behavior through the dynamic reciprocity of environmental, behavioral, and personal factors. Complementing SCT, the study integrates social and emotional competencies (SECs) using CASEL’s 5 dimensions (CASEL, 2024). By addressing both the broader environmental and personal influences (SCT) and specific leadership behaviors (SECs), these frameworks work in concert to explore how school leaders interpret effective leadership for managing backlash.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology optimally explores school leaders’ lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study uses semi-structured interviews to capture the socially constructed meanings of leadership practices. SCT and SECs guide the development of the interview protocol. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) shapes the study’s instrumentation, focusing on how school leaders make sense of significant life experiences (Charlick, 2016). By adopting an IPA approach, the instrument engages reflexively with participants’ experiences, enabling a deeper understanding by stepping into their perspectives. Through purposeful and snowballing sampling, the study includes 20 participants from primary and secondary schools in the UK and the USA.

Preliminary findings

The study’s findings reveal that school leaders manage conflicting stakeholder demands for socially contentious issues that elicit backlash effectively when they integrate emotional intelligence (self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management) into their leadership. Embracing responsible and transformational leadership behaviors enhances their decision-making during backlash from stakeholders. The findings also highlight the importance of building relational trust across these groups. Lastly, the participants identified specific skills such as

resilience, mindful listening, and emotion regulation as critical in addressing stakeholder backlash streaming from socially contentious issues.

Promoting Resilience in Turbulent Educational Times – the need for a multi-level approach.

Friday, 4th July - 16:00: Parallel Session 1 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 228

Prof. Michael Bottery (Hull University)

One important response to the turbulence of much educational activity at the present time is through developing forms of individual and institutional resilience. This seems at first blush to be a strong and appropriate means of responding to current concerns, yet there are a number of issues which need considering in the use of resilience strategies. This paper discusses three of them.

A first is that it might be argued that the best approach to dealing with such problems would be in tackling their causes 'upstream' – in other words, before or as they just begin, rather than reacting to them when they impact 'downstream'. Now one response would be to maintain that there are many times when things are only noticed when they impact 'downstream', and so ensuring that people and their places of educational work are sufficiently resilient when the turbulent and the unexpected occurs, would not only be the first but the best strategy. However, this paper argues that unless educators consciously adopt upstream as well as downstream perspectives and actions, then the need for a strategy of downstream resilience becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, rather than part of a larger and more comprehensive approach.

Second, whilst 'resilience' is most often used in the everyday sense of being able to bounce back from such turbulence, there are other, very different meanings to the term, which can suggest dissimilar - even contradictory - strategies and reactions. This paper then explores how some interpretations of its varied meanings may produce counter-productive response strategies. This paper suggests that it was principally employed in one discipline – ecology - before being appropriated by other disciplines, most notably in business economics. In the process its meaning – and its values - has been transformed in ways which need viewing with considerable caution by educators, as such usage may lead to the subversion of its original meaning, and may then exacerbate current educational problems.

A third and final issue is that definitions of 'resilience' are often determined by the focus of the discipline within which it is utilised. If that discipline is heavily focused at one level (e.g. the micro-level) , then it is likely that the exploration of the causes and impacts of turbulence and uncertainties will also be focused primarily at this level. A more comprehensive 'panarchic' approach is then needed, where causes, impacts and strategies of resilience are applied not just to instances at the micro-level, but at meso-, and macro- levels as well. The paper concludes that such multi-level understanding of the causes and impacts of turbulence would help create more comprehensive understandings and strategies of resilience, and would help change the mindsets of educators to look beyond current roles, and help build more collaborative forms of educational leadership.

**Symposium - A Critical
Examination of
Inspection frameworks
and practices in England
and the UAE**

A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE Paper 2

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Symposium - A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 91

Dr. Meng Tian (University of Birmingham), Prof. Colin Diamond (University of Birmingham)

In England, current punitive and performative inspection practices have intensified public resentment towards the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OfSTED). In 2024, a new His Majesty’s Chief Inspector was appointed, initiating a system-wide review of the inspection framework and practice. In July 2024, the Labour government won the general election, raising hopes of resetting the accountability system. Against this backdrop, this paper presents an insider’s view of OfSTED. Eleven former Her Majesty’s Inspectors and serving OfSTED inspectors were interviewed. Through the lenses of espoused theories and theories-in-use, this study uncovered inspectors’ shared concerns about an increasingly politicised OfSTED, a narrowed focus on education quality, an increased workload and diminished professional autonomy. Some root causes behind inconsistent inspection judgements and highly standardised inspection reports were explained. While only a few inspectors wanted to abolish one-word judgements at the time of the interviews, all expressed genuine belief in the value of inspection when carefully designed and properly conducted to serve pupils and schools. This paper highlights why scrapping one-word judgements is a welcome change, but more work is needed to rebuild trust, professionalise and depoliticise OfSTED, encourage local ingenuity and lower the stakes of inspections.

A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE Paper 1

Saturday, 5th July - 09:20: Symposium - A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 92

Dr. Kathryn Spicksley (University of Birmingham), Prof. Ben Kotzee (University of Birmingham), Dr. Meng Tian (University of Birmingham)

The framework used by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) to inspect schools in England is frequently revised, with the most recent revision taking place in 2019. In this paper, we use corpus-assisted discourse analysis to compare 390 school reports published under the most recent 2019 ‘Education Inspection Framework’ (EIF) with 390 school reports published under the previous, 2015 ‘Common Inspection Framework’ (CIF). We focus primarily on the discursive construction of curriculum and teacher workload, given the stated intentions of the 2019 EIF, however, this leads into wider discussions around the discursive construction of leadership responsibilities in the EIF. We find that the EIF engenders increased responsibility for school leaders. Furthermore, the EIF decreases certainty around inspection criteria and foci, while at the same time increasing the complexity of tasks for school leaders, particularly around discussions of staff well-being. These findings contribute to a holistic understanding of the negative responses to the EIF amongst school leaders.

A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE Paper 3

Saturday, 5th July - 09:40: Symposium - A Critical Examination of Inspection frameworks and practices in England and the UAE (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 93

Dr. Dawn England (University of Birmingham)

As Educational Technology (EdTech) becomes increasingly prevalent in schools worldwide, it is critical to understand the inclusion of this in Inspection Frameworks. The study investigates current EdTech integration trends and its influence on inspection ratings and student learning outcomes within the Dubai Inspection Framework which was modelled after Ofsted. Utilizing the CRISP-DM analytic method, the study analyzed content from all the available (N=169) school inspection reports from 2019 to early 2023 in Dubai Private Schools (DPS), encompassing 278,019 students, using a mixed-methods approach to data analysis. Findings reveal that while EdTech is integrated in 97.63% of DPS, its overall impact on student outcome is limited. EdTech is written as effective and/or innovative in inspection reports only in higher-rated schools, with significant subject specific differences. Six major challenges were identified in inspection reports, with the most prevalent being inconsistent (63.7% of the challenges) and limited (52.48%) use of EdTech by teachers. The study raises implications for informed inspection and policy-making in a digitally evolving landscape and concludes by recommending a refined evaluation framework for EdTech, informed by international standards, to drive inclusion and school improvement globally.

**Symposium - Sustainable
School Leadership in
Turbulent Times:
Findings and Implications
from a UK-wide study**

Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study – Paper 1: Setting the Scene: using place, identity and leadership to explore leadership sustainability

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Symposium - Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 130

Prof. Toby Greany (University of Nottingham), Dr. Mike Collins (University of Nottingham), Dr. Tom Perry (University of Warwick)

This paper sets the context and introduces the ongoing UK-wide Researching Sustainable School Leadership (ReSSLe) study, which focusses on both the supply of headteachers (i.e. succession 'pipeline' issues, such as how heads are identified, trained and supported) and fitness for purpose (i.e. how to understand leadership in a changing world).

We start by describing key features of devolved education policy and practice in each UK nation before providing core definitions and assumptions which underpin the research. First, the ways in which leadership and leadership development are defined reflect understandings of what education is 'for'. Second, we see leadership as: a) culturally situated and context specific, b) distributed, and c) a process of influence geared towards the achievement of shared goals. Third, we see leadership development as a process of individual career-long growth. Fourth, we see 'sustainability' as requiring an understanding not only of supply, but also diversity, equity, quality and fitness for the future.

We then describe the project design, which includes: literature reviews, expert interviews, locality case studies, analysis of secondary data, and surveys of leaders in each nation. We adopt a pragmatic and constructivist stance, inquiring into leadership through the experience of leaders, seeking to hold different paradigms in creative tension. As a comparative study, we seek to pay attention to processes of change.

We set out the project's conceptual framework, informed by literatures on identity and place. Professional identities are dynamic and change over time, although we strive for a unifying sense of self. Identities include individual and collective aspects, are socially constructed, and are influenced by multiple factors, including biography, history, culture, emotions, and professional norms. Identities are negotiated at micro and macro-levels, so are bound up with issues of values, power and legitimacy. A range of place-related issues mean that every school is unique, shaping the kinds of leadership required. While the local can be understood as a bounded place, place can also be seen as a site of power, through which information, people, things, and discourses flow. Furthermore, place operates at different scales - national, regional, local – which interact. Drawing data from seven locality case studies, we illustrate how we are using this framework to support our ongoing analysis.

Finally, informed by our project literature review, we highlight the study's emerging contributions, including its potential for critiquing the global policy consensus that there is 'one-best way' to do leadership

Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study – Paper 3: Sustainable School Leadership Across the UK: Findings from the Secondary Data Analysis and Survey

Saturday, 5th July - 09:20: Symposium - Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 229

Dr. Tom Perry (University of Warwick), Prof. Toby Greany (University of Nottingham), Dr. Mike Collins (University of Nottingham)

The final paper in the symposium draws on administrative secondary data from the four UK nations and data from a UK-wide large-scale survey. We compare how the workforce in each nation has changed over time and examine key sustainability issues such as turnover, career development, workforce composition and school leader experiences.

The secondary data analysis uses individual-level workforce data from England (2010-2023), Scotland (2010-2023), and Wales (2019-2023) and is analysed alongside public statistics from Northern Ireland. The analysis covers four areas:

1. Workforce Composition, giving a detailed profile of senior leaders by gender, age, ethnicity, contract types and qualifications, and how these have changed over time. Data are broken down by school phase, type, intake characteristics, performance and location.
2. Supply and Sustainability, where we address the critical question of current and future leadership sufficiency and analyse trends and identify predictors of turnover, retirement, sickness and absence.
3. Development and Careers, where we investigate career progression rates and trajectories, exploring links between leadership training, qualifications and career advancement alongside characteristics of individuals, school, locations and systems.
4. Leadership Teams and Contexts, looking at team composition and configurations, including size, experience variations, ethnic and gender balance, and leadership hierarchies.

The UK-wide Sustainable School Leadership Survey gathers in-depth information on: personal and career backgrounds and experience; values and motivations; leadership experiences and perspectives, allowing leaders to share insights on challenges and successes; development opportunities and their perceived impact; school characteristics and support structures available to school leaders; school contexts and community dynamics, understanding leadership in relation to place and community; and open-response reflections from leaders on their experiences and on fostering sustainable leadership practices.

Drawing on key results from across extensive analyses of the workforce and survey datasets, this paper presents findings interrogating several themes: First, we describe how the workforce is changing over a period of over a decade, comparing results across the UK nations. Key findings include shifts in the age profile, and ethnicity and gender gaps across the workforces. Second, we assess the adequacy of current and future leadership supply, considering issues of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ spots for leadership supply; how leadership turnover varies according to individual, school, local and systemic factors; and gender and ethnicity gaps in career progression. We also identify the factors that influence leaders’ decisions and outcomes with respect to promotion, school moves, and workforce exits. Finally, we consider the current experiences and perspectives of the workforce across the four UK nations and what this suggests about the present state and prospects for sustainable school leadership across the UK.

Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study – Paper 2: What Drains And Sustains Leaders In England, Scotland And Northern Ireland? Findings From Seven Place-Based Case Studies

Saturday, 5th July - 09:40: Symposium - Sustainable School Leadership in Turbulent Times: Findings and Implications from a UK-wide study (Renaissance Suite) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 260

Dr. Mike Collins (University of Nottingham), Prof. Toby Greany (University of Nottingham), Dr. Tom Perry (University of Warwick)

The second paper of the symposium introduces the seven place-based case studies that form a major strand of the wider, mixed methods, Researching Sustainable School Leadership (ReSSLe) study. The paper describes the case studies' design and rationale before introducing preliminary headline findings from the analysis.

The selection of the seven localities is briefly reviewed first. We planned for a distribution of localities across the three UK nations that are the main focus of the study: three in England and two each in Scotland and Northern Ireland (our lighter touch review in Wales does not include case studies). We took localities to be places with a clear geographic definition, usually aligned with administrative boundaries such as Local Authorities. Informed by nationally available data and steered by our national advisory groups, we identified the seven localities, seeking to ensure a range in terms of geographic location, urban and non-urban contexts, socio-economic and demographic factors, and the nature and performance of local educational provision.

The paper then outlines the design of the case studies and the approach to collecting data. In each area, we wanted to gain insight into: the experience of leading schools in a particular place; how people have become headteachers there; how leaders and schools are supported; what challenges them; how leadership development works in the area; if and how schools work together, and who takes what roles. These dimensions of leaders' experience were important for addressing the central research questions of the study which focus on both the supply of headteachers and fitness for purpose of school leadership and preparation for leadership in a changing world.

The main methods used were semi-structured interviews and focus groups with local leaders (including senior leaders from local authorities and trusts and providers of leadership development), serving and potential headteachers, and employers. Where feasible we undertook observations of leader training events and network meetings. We also made use of publicly available documents and data. In total, we completed 111 interviews and heard from more than 130 participants across the localities.

Finally, the paper introduces and presents some preliminary findings. For this paper, a subset of the analyses is described. Before each interview with school leaders, they were asked to complete a pro-forma asking what drained them, and what sustained them in their role. This was then discussed at length during the interview. This paper concentrates mainly on common themes in participants' responses to the prompts and questions about what drains and sustains them. In conclusion, an analysis is presented, comparing cases and geographies.

Parallel Session 2

Educational Differentiation through the Lens of Leadership: A Synthesis of Historical Policy Pendulum Swings and Systemic Complexity

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Parallel Session 2 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 28

Mrs. Johanna Lüddeckens (Linnaeus University)

This abstract presents a synthesis of two articles examining educational differentiation with a particular focus on school leadership and Swedish historical policy development. Both studies address differentiation as a key concept in fostering inclusivity in education, although they approach the topic from different perspectives — one from a contemporary, leadership-focused perspective and the other from a historical lens analyzing the Swedish education system’s evolution.

The article *Bridging Policy and Practice: A Review of School Leadership in Differentiation from a System Perspective* examines school leadership’s role in managing differentiation and inclusivity. A review of 15 articles highlighted the importance of distributed leadership, in which principals delegate responsibilities to foster a collaborative environment for differentiated instruction (DI). This approach underscores the significance of leadership in overcoming administrative challenges and in promoting professional development. Effective leadership is crucial for inclusive practices, requiring principals to comprehensively understand the educational system and address diverse student needs. This research situates differentiation within a systems thinking framework, linking school culture, policies, and leadership behaviors to the implementation of differentiation and inclusivity.

Balancing Educational Reforms: The Historical Pendulum Swing of Differentiation and Equity in the Swedish Education System examines organizational and pedagogical differentiation from the 19th century to the present. It outlines the fluctuating balance between inclusive and exclusive practices, noting reforms, such as the ‘Folk-skolan’ and comprehensive school curricula. The study illustrates how political and societal changes have influenced whether students are grouped by ability (organizational differentiation) or whether teachers tailor their methods to diverse classrooms (pedagogical differentiation). It identifies a recurring pendulum swing, with recent trends favoring organizational differentiation such as specialized teaching groups, which challenge inclusive education goals.

Together, these two articles provide a rich synthesis of the role of differentiation in education from both leadership and policy perspectives. The theoretical frameworks employed in systems thinking and historical analysis complement each other, offering insights into how leadership and educational structures interact to influence differentiation strategies. While leadership studies emphasize the active role of school leaders in fostering inclusivity through collaboration and professional development, the historical analysis traces how differentiation has historically oscillated between inclusion and exclusion, influenced by broader societal and political shifts. The synthesis of these two perspectives highlights the complexity of achieving equity in education through differentiation. School leadership is positioned as a crucial lever for promoting inclusive practices; however, historical trends indicate that systemic and policy-level factors can either support or hinder these efforts. The articles jointly suggest that successful differentiation requires not only strong leadership but also a supportive policy environment that prioritizes inclusivity while balancing practical implementation challenges. This dual focus on leadership and historical context offers valuable implications for both educational practitioners and policymakers aiming to navigate the tension between differentiation and equity.

In conclusion, by combining insights from both leadership theory and historical analysis, these studies highlight the need for an integrated approach to differentiation—one that is mindful of the system-wide factors shaping educational practices and supports school leaders in their efforts to create inclusive, adaptive learning environments.

Using Action and Activist Research Processes to Enact School Change Projects

Saturday, 5th July - 09:15: Parallel Session 2 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 179

Prof. Lynda Tredway (East Carolina University), Prof. Joseph Flessa (OISE, University of Toronto), Prof. Matthew Militello (East Carolina University)

In this presentation we will share the results of analysis and interpretation of 58 EdD theses in which the EdD students used a particular form of participatory action and activist research (PAAR) to implement change projects in their educational institutions. In this PAAR process, EdD students act as lead researchers and engage participants (3-6 co-practitioner researchers) in a PAAR project and study over three cycles of inquiry (18 months). During that time, they collect and analyze qualitative evidence from the cycles of inquiry and collectively decide on and enact changes or improvements. The primary data sources include field notes, observations, conversations, reflective memos, and Community Learning Exchange artifacts. Each lead researcher facilitates professional learning sessions in which they analyze and use data and make collaborative decisions about next steps. The goal of using PAAR in the EdD program is that doctoral students will continue to use this process in their roles as school and district leaders when they complete the EdD study. As a result common to findings, the CPR team members with whom the lead researchers (EdD students) work become more familiar with the processes, and they take on roles as anchors and ambassadors for the PAAR process and the change effort. The professional doctorate has the ambitious goal of connecting theory and practice; because this process requires that EdD student co-develop tools of use to colleagues, those connections are built in from the beginning of the dissertation process.

The presenters will share findings from the analysis of these EdD dissertations, illustrated with specific examples. The analysis found that:

- School leaders cultivated the necessary conditions for school change, by providing structure and support to infuse day to day processes with a pedagogy of trust
- Circular leadership supported collective effort for enacting change
- Community Learning Exchange axioms plus liberatory design modes, mindsets, and actions were foundational to leaders' knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Evidence-based observations opened opportunities for effective and critical dialogue
- Authentic, meaningful, and context-specific professional learning does not rely solely on good intentions. It requires attending to the mixed emotions arising from school change efforts, deep experiences in the intended change, and data-based decisions about content that organizational actors decide on collaboratively.

This session will be of interest to conference attendees concerned about EdD curriculum, the implementation of school and system change, and how to model leading and learning together.

Building School Networks to Achieve Sustainable Small Schools: Japan’s Challenge

Saturday, 5th July - 09:30: Parallel Session 2 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 204

Mrs. Midori Ueda (NIER)

In Japan, where the population is declining, it is becoming difficult to keep schools open in rural area (remote mountainous areas and on remote islands). In particular, in high schools (upper secondary school), where providing a variety of subject options is important to ensure learning of pupils, it is an important educational issue to consider how to ensure the sustainable survival of small schools in Japan.

However, in the current situation, there are disparities in efforts due to the financial strength of local governments, which are the entities that establish high schools, and it is difficult to find ways to solve the problems.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has implemented the “CORE High School Network Initiative,” a three-year project starting in 2021. This project aims to build a small high school network model by considering specific measures to collaborate with schools and communities (such as simultaneous two-way remote classes and building a collaborative system with related institutions such as multiple high schools, local community organisations and local governments) in order to ensure the survival and revitalization of small schools through engaging in distinctive or attractive education that small high schools cannot achieve alone.

In this presentation, we will take up the CORE High School Network Initiative as a case study (13 local authorities in Japan). The aim of the study is to clarify what kind of leadership should be exercised and how it should be exercised to enable sustainable school management at small schools when implementing sustainable school management through such inter-school networks.

The study will analyze the text of progress reports compiled by each local government and organise the characteristics of each case from case studies using semi-structured interviews with project managers (board of education officials, high school principals). The study will then elucidate the characteristics of leadership in each local government’s efforts based on David Hopkins’ theory of systems leadership.

Empowering women through sports leadership and collaborative professional learning communities

Saturday, 5th July - 09:45: Parallel Session 2 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 237

Dr. William Sterrett (Baylor University)

This session will overview a US State Department grant called IDEA-SPORT that involved a one-year effort focused on empowering women in Pakistan through collaborative teaching strategies focused on sports (including badminton, table tennis, soccer/football, and cricket) and teamwork lessons (including team-building, problem-solving and conflict resolution). This presentation will overview how teams spanning seven institutions of higher education in the United States and Pakistan sought to work together to 1) Understand the unique context of women in leadership in Pakistan; 2.) Focus on aligning efforts to the existing sports curricular efforts; 3.) Promote voices of successful women athletes; 4.) Cultivate a sense of sports leadership translating into civic engagement, and 5.) Fostering a unique interfaith and intrafaith component that brought US and Pakistan institutions together.

Our grant-funded effort sought to thus address the following focus areas:

- 1.) The planning involved to collaboratively spark the interest and enhance knowledge of girls, and other vulnerable and under-served populations to SPORT-related fields by encouraging civil society participation and engage in activities to develop leadership, social, team-building, and problem-solving skills?
2. Our work together to increase awareness of female leaders and their successes, while seeking to improve the knowledge and skills of female students and athletes through engaging SPORT-focused curriculum and development of SPORT leadership and team-building exercises?
3. I will describe how we worked together to implement SPORT-related units for use educational institutions across Pakistan to build capacity for female empowerment through sports leadership to help support the next generation of Pakistani women in sports and connected fields.
4. I will overview how we worked to strengthen people-to-people connections between educators in Pakistan and the US through virtual planning sessions and on-the-ground face-to-face professional development opportunities for secondary teachers, coaches, and teacher educators in Pakistan.

These focus areas helped frame our work of collaboration that included virtual planning sessions, a week of on-the-ground training in Lahore, Pakistan, and fostered a sustained sense of working together to keep the focus on empowering women leaders in an area where they are historically underrepresented. We will share research findings, examples of teaching strategies. and reflections on what has helped make the work successful. This session will highlight examples, strategies, and glimpses from the on-the-ground implementation as well as data recently published (Sterrett et al, 2024) that provides insights on participant engagement.

Reference:

Sterrett, W.L., Mahmood, A., Magnusen, M., Bashir, A., Sukhera, S., Saeed, M.A., Khan, A.M., Ramsey, B., Ramsey, C., Boersma, J., Abel, H., & Frey. M. (2024). Engaging an international professional learning community to support underrepresented educators in sports leadership. *Frontiers in Education*, 9(1) 1-9.

Parallel Session 2

Professional Learning Communities in a Centralised School System: Insights from School Leaders and Primary Teachers on Implementation and Challenges

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Parallel Session 2 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 218

Dr. Aikaterini Balasi (University of Western Macedonia), Prof. Georgios Iordanidis (University of Western Macedonia)

Today, educational organisations must demonstrate flexibility and adaptability, functioning as ‘learning organisations’ and ‘professional learning communities’ (PLCs) where principals and teachers collaborate to seek, share, and apply knowledge to enhance professional effectiveness and student outcomes. PLCs are widely regarded as an effective professional development strategy for whole-school improvement, simultaneously promoting individual, team, and organisational growth. PLCs have attracted considerable academic interest globally; however, much of the research relies on a shared body of literature, suggesting that PLCs exhibit universal characteristics that transcend national contexts. Most studies employed quantitative approaches focusing on PLCs’ positive outcomes, with few addressing the influence of specific contexts, inhibiting factors, and school autonomy. This study examines PLCs in the Greek education system, the most centralised among 68 countries, characterised by extensive regulations and bureaucracy. Its aim was to identify how Greek teachers and school leaders experience, perceive, and interpret the implementation of shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practices, and supportive conditions (Hord’s PLC theoretical model) within their school context. Moreover, the study interpreted the level of maturity of primary schools as PLCs.

The sample involved 19 school leaders and 13 teachers (n=32), selected through convenience sampling. Using Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenological approach, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis, identifying six themes and 20 sub-themes.

Findings suggest that Greek primary schools’ teachers experience ‘shared and supportive leadership’ through responsibility distribution, decision-making participation, and initiative-taking. However, the distribution of power, authority, and leadership roles remains limited. Shared values and vision primarily focus on student learning and achievement, but without significant emphasis on data-driven metrics and accountability. ‘Collective learning and application’ occurs through knowledge sharing and collaboration, though collaboration is based mostly on top-down initiatives and formal processes within daily routines. While teachers engage in ‘shared personal practice’ through the exchange of teaching practices and resources, context and inhibiting factors indicate that cultural norms favouring individualism persist. Participants identified ‘supportive conditions’—such as human relationships and organisational structures—but noted limitations that hinder the development of a collective culture. Some discrepancies also emerged between principals’ and teachers’ perspectives, thus revealing the impact of self-perception and role positions in the workplace on PLC implementation/development. This study offers insights into how teachers and leaders experience the five PLC dimensions within a highly centralised school system, highlighting simultaneously barriers and bureaucratic constraints that hinder PLC maturity. Findings indicate that Greek primary schools remain at an early stage of PLC development (2nd stage/implementation), lacking the deep integration of PLC principles into school policy and culture. Although teachers’ and principals’ sensemaking implies that they interact in a learning community, the bureaucratic context and institutional constraints mentioned, create a school culture of ‘privacy’ which reinforces isolated work while diminishing sharing knowledge and good practices, collaborative learning and work, and trust. There is a need for an adaptable, context-specific PLC framework and increased school autonomy to foster PLC development. Implications for policy-makers, school principals, school leadership professional development/training advocates, and researchers are discussed.

Leading Teacher Epistemic Networks in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs): a review of literature and preliminary conceptual framework.

Saturday, 5th July - 09:15: Parallel Session 2 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 233

Mrs. Helen Angell (University of Nottingham)

The context of this paper is the English education system where a significant proportion of schools are within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). A MAT is a group of schools operating outside of the Local Authority and instead overseen by national government. The development of MATs has been controversial; at best they are portrayed as a vehicle for collective improvement, but others highlight their hierarchical structure and impact on system fragmentation. The perspective adopted here is that MATs can (but might not) enable a self-improving system utilising 'in-house' opportunities for collaboration and professional development.

Teacher epistemic networks (TENs) provide one example of how leaders in some MATs have structured collaboration as a facilitator of professional development and school improvement, although their impact is contested. TENs can be formed, structured and evolve in a number of ways but their focus is on enabling members to develop shared knowledge, theory, language and artefacts. My PhD study aims to explore the assumptions and realities that emerge from leading and being members of TENs within MATs in England, a foreshadowed issue as a practitioner of school improvement.

This paper reports findings from an ongoing review of literature, completed to inform the PhD study. The review approach was iterative and integrative, seeking to identify and synthesise research and evidence relating to key areas of interest including: MAT policy and practice; governance and school improvement; organisational change, growth and integration; network and collaboration leadership; teacher networks; professional development and teacher knowledge and growth.

Beginning with supervisor recommendations and discussions, literature was then identified through database searches and search engines using the key words above. This included academic and grey literature such as journal articles, policy documents and education commentary published in English between 2000 and 2024. As this progressed, a more focused thematic search emerged which included teacher identity, expertise and curriculum; social cohesion, isolation and boundaries; and communication, negotiation and compulsion.

I then describe my emerging conceptual model, arguing that three ideas from the literature are of particular use: Weick's ideas about how organisations sensemake as a continual process of adaptation and responsiveness, especially in times of turbulence, and how this is useful when considering the ecosystem of MATs and how the collaboration of teachers and leaders is organised. Secondly, if collaboration has been chosen as a school improvement mechanism, Huxham and Vangen's description of collaborative advantage offers a lens through which to view the leadership of collaboration. Thirdly, Wenger's Communities of Practice as a social theory of learning offer a perspective about the manifestation of collaboration in TENs.

Finally, I suggest a visual model of TENs using Wenger's Communities of Practice as organic and unstable entities which are both responsive and structured around subject specialism. I explore the structures which enable engagement and cohesion, the alignment of language, tools and codes in the specialism and finally how an individual's imagination and identity are developed as a result of engagement and in what ways this impacts upon teaching in classrooms.

Responsive school-improvement coaching practices under turbulent conditions: A multiple case study

Saturday, 5th July - 09:30: Parallel Session 2 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 142

Dr. Rima Karami (American University of Beirut), Ms. Yusra Khattab (American University of Beirut)

Educational reform need to recognize that schools operate within diverse environments that impact their needs. While some schools experience minimal disruptions, others operate in challenging contexts. Schools in turbulent contexts benefit from differentiated approaches to improvement that account for their unique cultural and contextual characteristics. Effective school improvement initiatives requires coaches who can make dynamic, context-sensitive decisions that align with the unique organizational and social structures of each school.

Project (P) seeks a transformative shift in educational reform across the Arab region, a context of protracted crisis. It's theory of change suggests that university experts should partner with schools committed to improvement, building school-level capacity to foster a collective agency capable of influencing policymakers to provide supportive policies for sustainable self-renewal. The projects' coaches play a pivotal role in building leadership capacity of school improvement teams through a program that provides job-embedded professional development tailored to unique needs. P's coaching model includes defined roles, competencies, a structured journey, and responsive coaching practices tailored to each school's specific context and challenges.

This study explores practices that coaches in Project P implemented to anticipate and manage challenges encountered while building school teams' leadership capacity for school-based improvement. The study utilizes a multiple case qualitative research design, focusing on experiences of coaches in three schools in Lebanon operating under turbulent conditions. These cases provide diverse perspectives, offering a comprehensive understanding of responsive coaching practices across different contexts.

The study adopts Bottery's conceptualization of context, defining the leadership team as the micro level and the school and its external environment as the meso level. To analyze each level, it applies Bolman and Deal's four-frame model, which includes the Human Resource, Structural, Political, and Symbolic dimensions. The analysis explores how coaches navigated challenges with the leadership team, the school, and the external environment across these four dimensions to support school improvement, offering insights into how coaching practices were tailored to specific contextual factors.

Data were obtained from the project's extensive databank, which includes documented experiences with each school, such as coaches' meeting reports, reflection journals, and coaching plans. A thematic analysis approach was applied that capture practices coaches used to address unique challenges across the different dimensions. Preliminary results revealed that coaches employed a range of responsive coaching practices across human, structural, and political dimensions to address challenges and facilitate improvement. In the human dimension, coaches focused on skill-specific training, built trust through clear communication, actively listening to concerns, and offering expert support beyond their formal role. Structurally, they facilitated team meetings by aligning schedules, extended their availability beyond formal hours, supported the establishment of well-defined roles and procedures within the school, and advocated for team autonomy in implementing improvements. Politically, coaches empowered team leadership while navigating existing power dynamics, particularly between the principal and leadership team members. They also utilized individual meetings and informal communication to address and resolve conflicts effectively.

The study offers implications for coaches by highlighting key responsive practices. It also contributes to the literature on coaching in an understudied context.

A Proposed Model of Transformational Distributed School Leadership in Response to School Leaders

Saturday, 5th July - 09:45: Parallel Session 2 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 69

Ms. Inez Wilson Heenan (University of Limerick), Dr. Niamh Lafferty (University of Limerick),

Prof. Patricia Mannix-McNamara (University of Limerick)

This paper examines Irish policies and guidelines for primary schools where leadership is specifically referenced with focus on links to transformational and distributed school leadership. Of particular interest is how transformational and distributed leadership models could aid effective, and sustainable leadership enactment in times of exceptional change. A qualitative study was undertaken, involving interviews with primary school and system leaders, to explore the factors that facilitate and/or inhibit transformational school leadership within a whole school community. The research questions comprised: (1) What are the perceptions of primary school and system leaders relating to the facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting transformational school leadership, and how transformational school leadership is perceived to build relations with parents and the wider school community? (2) a) Is there scope to create synergy between transformational and distributed school leadership approaches that may provide support for leadership in the whole school community? b) Can a blended model align with current Irish government policies? The data highlighted the many factors that transcend both transformational and distributed approaches. These informed the construction of a synthesised model of transformational and distributed school leadership. The authors also accompany this model with a roadmap, that may support approaches to school leadership practice for the whole school community, at primary and post-primary level, in Ireland. The model is presented with transformational leadership principles, distributed leadership practices, and a roadmap for implementation. The following six I's of transformational school leadership underpin the model; idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inclusive culture, and improved offering. Distributed leadership practices support and include; shared creation, space to lead, sharing vision, macro to micro, reciprocal relationships, active agency, contextual growth, belonging, interdependence, learning communities. The accompanying roadmap includes seven steps; i) record the school's vision, mission, culture, ethos, contexts and values statement; ii) organise the school's needs accordingly; iii) aim for a unified journey; iv) develop vision and shared goals; v) motivate with trusting and growing individual and team relationships; vi) agency, autonomy, support, responsibility and accountability, per individual competencies, passion, position and availability; vii) praise, review, scaffold, communicate, progress, celebrate and publicise achievement of goals. The roadmap is designed to facilitate the implementation process of the model, accommodating societal turbulence, while supporting reform and development. To facilitate successful enactment, professional development training would be a contingent step for all staff and school stakeholders, for undergraduate, postgraduate professional master of education, and teacher education programmes. Potential benefits such as i) having the clarity of a leadership model which can sit alongside current guidelines for school leadership in Irish primary schools, ii) supporting Department of Education policy formulation, iii) building leadership capacity, iv) enhancing school community culture, v) increasing motivation and organisation commitment, vi) giving schools a way of monitoring the shared journey with the whole school community and system leaders, and vii) facilitating co-professional collaborations with other school communities, are discussed in relation to implementation of the model in an Irish school leadership context.

Parallel Session 2

Managing/Negotiating the Unexpected: Principals’ Sensemaking of a Policy Mandate to Reopen Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Parallel Session 2 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 172

Mrs. Andrea O’Sullivan (University of South Florida), Dr. Bill Black (University of South Florida)

Focus of Enquiry

The focus of this study is to investigate how four retired high school principals/administrators, who were actively leading during the COVID-19 pandemic make sense of their work, retrospectively and prospectively. More particularly, how these retired principals/administrators made sense of the State of Florida’s Executive Order to reopen schools in the heights of the pandemic, before the rest of the nation. We questioned how they made sense for academics, health and safety, and how they dealt with challenges and contradictions that emerged.

Theoretical Frameworks

Methodologically, the study is framed by Karl Weick (1995) theory of Sensemaking, as reconceptualized by Coetzee & Wilkinson (2020). Weick (1995) proposes Sensemaking is a “rough guideline for inquiry,” constituting the principles of *identity, retrospection, enactment, social, ongoing, extracted cues, and plausibility*, to which Coetzee adds an eight principle of *reflection*. According to Weick, Sensemaking allows individuals to gain an understanding of an ambiguous situation, which is essential for efficient and effective crisis management (Weick, 1993). The authors also used a protocol of semi-structured interviews for data collection, reflexive thematic analysis, including a priori codes, and poetics for reflection.

Significance

According to Jori, (2019) “when a crisis strikes, responders need to make sense of it to gain an understanding of its origins, nature and implications.” This was the role of the State of Florida, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the Department of Education issued an executive order to reopen schools. Jori (2019) continues “In this way, crisis sensemaking guides the implementation.” Implementation was the role of principals/administrators, and this study inquired about their crisis sensemaking. Sensemaking theory “postulates individuals or groups operating in equivocal contexts and utilizing unplanned strategies defer to their own understanding” (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). The preliminary findings suggest that Sensemaking is important in facilitating a plausible understanding of a traumatic situation as it allows participants to see where they have been (reflection) and reconcile with where they are going (retrospection). The pandemic is a new crisis for the field of education and leadership must be developed to move forward (De Voto, et al., 2023). This paper is aligned with the conference theme in that it presents the experiences of principals/administrators in ways that articulate Sensemaking as a prerequisite for reform and renewal. Poems will be shared to generate discussion across participants across international educational contexts.

It’s Real

COVID-19 created divisiveness

The trauma is real!

It will take a long time before we are all healed

I have strong relationships with fellow leaders,

Teachers I’ve worked with before

We try to make sense,

Can’t pinpoint why,

Toxicity is real!

The toxicity is simply remnants

Remnants of politics and the Mask
The bottle cap's off
We know how we feel
The Genie can't return to the flask.
The feeling of leading during COVID-19
Is one that can't be ignored
Leaving educators wo/andering
Literally leaving school doors
Wondering about options for leading
Outside the principal/administrator role
Mental health stealing
Teachers fleeing
Principals leaving the floor

Can stressors predict principals' mental health?: An exploration of stressors using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

Saturday, 5th July - 09:15: Parallel Session 2 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 205

Dr. Eleanor Su-Keene (Texas A&M University)

Work-related stressors and mental health are major issues that threaten the sustainability of principals and headmasters. For decades, researchers have shown that a career in education administration is taxing: more than 60 hours of work per week, unpredictable schedules, conflicting pressures and priorities, and increasing job responsibilities. Further, these issues are persistent in nearly every country including New Zealand (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005), the UK (Darmody & Smyth, 2016), Malaysia (Tahir et al., 2019), Australia (Gorrell & Nobile, 2023), and more. In a recent US study, researchers found that principals experienced more frequent job-related stress and depression than the average working population and experienced more difficulties coping with the job. Female principals and principals of color were at greater risk of high-stress and poor mental health. Commonly cited work stressors in the U.S. include accountability, school climate, student-related issues, work-life balance, etc. While it's accepted that school leaders are subjected to frequent stressors that impact their mental health, less is known about the differences in stressors and the varying degrees that it impacts principals' mental health. The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to examine the differences in stressors using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model and how it predicts principals' mental health in Texas, USA. I recruited 123 principals from K-12 public, non-charter schools to complete a survey that assessed principals' overall mental and open-ended questions about stressors. I analyzed qualitative data using top-down and bottom-up analytic approaches specifically through in-vivo, descriptive, and *a priori* coding techniques. I also conducted descriptive statistics, a correlation analysis, and an exploratory multiple regression. Principals scored an average of 10.24 (SD=5.79) and 9.67 (SD=6.34) on the anxiety and depression instrument, respectively, which aligns with *moderate* levels of anxiety and depression. Stressors such as individual demands ($r(121)=0.211$, $p=0.0189$) and political hostility ($r(121)=-0.1944$) were significantly correlated with mental health symptoms. At this time, findings for the exploratory multiple regression are still underway. These preliminary findings provide evidence that certain types of stressors have a more significant impact on principals' mental health and overall well-being which align with BELMAS theme this year on the development and sustainability of educational leaders.

How does school principals’ empowering leadership affect adolescents’ engagement?

Saturday, 5th July - 09:30: Parallel Session 2 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 29

Dr. Rima’a Da’as (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The school principal has a central role in promoting students’ success, learning, and achievements (e.g., Wu & Shen 2022). However, to the best of my knowledge, school principals’ effects on student engagement, and in particular their effect on homeroom teachers’ work to promote student engagement, have never been examined. Specifically, only a few studies have addressed the effect of principals’ empowering leadership (EL) on student outcomes or attitudes, despite the fact that EL behaviors have been related to teachers’ outcomes, such as: work engagement (Alotaibi et al., 2020). Conger and Kanungo describe empowerment as ‘a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information’ (1988, 474).

Based on the EL (e.g., Arnold et al. 2000) and upper echelons (Hambrick & Mason 1984) theories, which argue that leadership characteristics affect organizational outcomes indirectly through the promotion of organizational processes, the current study examines the main question: How do school principals as empowering leaders affect students’ engagement in the school? I argue that empowering school leaders impact students’ affective and behavioral engagement in school indirectly through empowered homeroom teachers’ engagement in their work. The study further examines the effect of a collaboration between homeroom and class teachers as a moderator between the homeroom teacher and students’ engagement.

Engagement in work is a positive work-related state of mind that includes three dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker 2010). The current study examines students’ affective and behavioral engagement. Affective engagement describes students’ feelings about their school, teachers, peers, and learning (Hart et al., 2014). It contains two dimensions: liking for learning and liking for school (Hart et al., 2011). Behavioral engagement consists of engagement in school life (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007). It contains two subscales: effort and persistence, and engagement in extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Based on data from three sources: 317 homeroom teachers (rated their engagement in work and collaboration), 504 teachers (rated school empowering leadership), and 6,589 students (rated their affective and behavioral engagement) from 64 Arab Israeli middle schools (grades 7–9), multilevel structural equation modelling results showed that the relationship between principals’ EL and homeroom teachers’ work engagement was significant and positive, as was that between homeroom teacher engagement and student affective engagement (level 1), and a positive relationship was found between homeroom teacher engagement and students’ behavioral engagement (level 1). Collaboration with class teachers did not moderate the relationship between homeroom teachers’ engagement in their work and students’ affective or behavioral engagement. Further, empowering school leadership impacts students’ affective and behavioral engagement through homeroom teachers’ engagement.

The research makes a significant theoretical contribution by deciphering the processes by which principals practicing EL lead students to become engaged in the school, especially during the critical period of adolescence. Thus, enable building school interventions that will increase engagement in this critical period of their lives when they are facing social, physiological, emotional, and cognitive changes.

Instructional Leadership in China: Multiple Primary School Case Studies

Saturday, 5th July - 09:45: Parallel Session 2 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 102

Mrs. Xiaoting Guo (University of Nottingham), Prof. Tony Bush (University of Nottingham), Dr. Simin Ghavifekr (University of Nottingham)

The importance of leadership for school improvement is well recognised, and considered one of the main factors that influence the quality of education. Instructional leadership, in particular, not only promotes teacher learning, but is also believed to be the most powerful contributor to enhanced student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). Bush (2008, 2014) defines instructional leadership as the direction of leaders’ influence rather than the influence process itself, differentiating instructional leadership from other leadership models. As the effectiveness of instructional leadership has been recognised, it has been introduced and practiced in many other countries. However, a one-size-fits-all approach or model of instructional leadership is not appropriate when encountering a specific school context. Research on instructional leadership is mainly based in Western countries (with partly decentralised contexts), and only limited research can be found in centralised countries, such as China. In China, the central role of instructional leadership has been recognised by the central government in 2013. However, current research (e.g. Guo & Lu, 2018; Qian et al., 2017) shows that the concept of instructional leadership is not fully understood or widely accepted by front-line educators, the development of instructional leadership is still in its infancy, and the practice of instructional leadership in China seems unclear.

My paper will present the findings of a study of instructional leadership in selected Chinese primary schools. Specifically, the study focuses on how Chinese urban primary school leaders enact instructional leadership and how different contexts influence the practice of instructional leadership.

A multiple-case study design is adopted for this study with several different methods, including semi-structured interviews with school principals, vice principals for instruction, Teacher Research Group (TRG) chairs and teachers, observation of leadership practices and TRG meetings, as well as analysis of relevant documents at school, provincial and national levels.

The findings show that instructional leadership in China is enacted through a shared or distributed approach with multiple school leaders and teachers involved. Notably, experienced teachers, who may or may not have formal school leadership positions, take on significant mentoring and modelling responsibility. Additionally, the practice of instructional leadership may be impacted by Confucianism in multiple ways, both positively and negatively. Unique challenges in enacting instructional leadership have also been reported in this study.

This provides valuable insights into how school leaders in centralised systems, such as China, understand, adapt, and practice instructional leadership in a dynamic era of constant educational reforms and turbulence. This study also helps to promote the understanding of instructional leadership and develop indigenous leadership models in the future.

Parallel Session 2

How Should Leaders Navigate AI: Advice from the Practitioner World

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Parallel Session 2 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 231

*Dr. Jayson Richardson (William & Mary), Mr. Brian Vedder (University of Denver), Ms. Amanda Roberts (University of Denver),
Dr. Scott McLeod (University of Colorado, Denver)*

We collected all articles from popular U.S. practitioner magazines focusing on AI and school leadership within the first year of the public release of generative AI. We wanted to know: What messages are school leaders receiving about artificial intelligence in popular media? And how is leading artificial intelligence in K-12 school settings being discussed in the practitioner literature?

Data collection occurred between November 30, 2022, and November 30, 2023, capturing the first full year when ChatGPT was released to the public. We focused on 12 core magazines commonly available to school leaders (i.e., *Education Week*, *District Administration*, *PDK International*, *AASA School Administrator*, *Tech & Learning*, *THE Journal*, *American School Board Journal*, *Ed Tech*, *ASCD Educational Leadership*, *Edutopia*, *NEA Today*, and *Principal Magazine*). After filtering for relevancy, we ended with 23 articles that contained direct lessons for school leaders about generative AI.

Equity and ethical concerns were noted in 19 of the 23 articles. The general sentiment was a worry about guardrails in schools. The articles that we located indicated that school leaders must consider the wide-ranging impact of AI on institutional structures, professional opportunities, and community outreach. From our analysis of the articles, it was evident that for school leaders, the most pressing concern around AI might be how it affects their classrooms and student learning. The articles contained suggestions, advantages, and developments for pedagogy and classroom design centered on personalized learning, careful AI implementation, enhanced curriculum, preparing students for future positions, and honing students' critical thinking.

Educating, involving, and collaborating with stakeholders around AI use was a prevalent theme in the articles, showing up in 22 of the 23 pieces. Direct suggestions for school leaders included staying open to dialogue with all pertinent partners and embracing where individuals are in their unique AI knowledge and acceptance journey. A theme noted in all 23 articles was that leaders must experiment with, reflect on, and design checkpoints when incorporating AI into their schools. We identified a few trends under this theme, including the push for school leaders to (1) embrace AI technology instead of restricting it, (2) play around with AI before making campus-wide decisions, and (3) be open to new ways of leading built on these technological updates.

To embrace the power of AI, the research team used generative AI to facilitate data analysis, coding, and thematic creation. This approach was a fresh, innovative way to balance human comprehension and identify trends within the articles. Generative AI was an impressive, complex tool in this experiment, but more refining must be done before the tool can be fully relied on. In the end, Claude served as a second set of eyes.

Further studies could focus on leaders' and teachers' professional development efficacy around generative AI. Theoretically, more work needs to be done on how these new AI technologies impact leading, teaching, and learning.

Cultivating social and emotional competence for school leaders: An effectiveness Study

Saturday, 5th July - 09:15: Parallel Session 2 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 103

Dr. Julia Mahfouz (University of Colorado Denver), Dr. George Panayiotou (University of Colorado Denver), Dr. Kathleen King (North Central College), Mr. Danny Dib Yahya (University of Colorado Denver), Dr. Stephen Kotok (St. Johns University)

Objectives. In order to lead and thrive, principals need time and support to develop their social emotional competencies (SEC) to manage job-related stress, build trust, and model caring and culturally responsive behaviors. They need to utilize strategies and develop skills that enable them to interact with others consciously, with full awareness of how their actions impact themselves, others, and their environments. Thus, this study explores a) how principals experience *Soul of Leadership: Courage, Presence, & Integrity* (SoL)—a professional development program based on cultivating leader SEC and b) the influence of SoL on their wellbeing and leadership.

Theoretical Frameworks. This research study is informed by two theoretical frameworks: the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) that shows how adult experiences are conceptualized as having the power to both transform one’s perspectives and assumptions and change one’s behavior; the prosocial school leader model (Mahfouz et al., 2018) illustrates how cultivating the principals’ SEC promotes a positive school environment, which in turn influences social, emotional, and academic outcomes for teachers and students.

Methods. The SoL program included four 2-hour & 15-minute whole group sessions and three 90-minute small group sessions that were spread from January to June and facilitated by co-developers of the program. The cohort included 43 participants divided into two groups (cohort 3A, n=23; cohort 3B, n=20) from Massachusetts school districts. The complete corpus of data collected includes: (a) participant evaluation surveys about SoL program completed at the end of the 8 whole group sessions with 43 participants; (b) 18 audio-recorded pre- and post- interviews with 18 participants, transcribed verbatim in their entirety and analyzed utilizing thematic coding; & (c) baseline and post self-report surveys conducted before the start of the program and at the completion of the program that included the following scales: *Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire* (Baer et al., 2008), *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Maslach et al., 1997), & *Psychological Capital Questionnaire* (Ruderman & Clerkin, 2015) using quasi-experimental research design for analysis.

Preliminary Results. A majority reported that they were highly satisfied (66.8%) or satisfied (30%) with the overall program. The interviews portrayed dedicated leaders extremely committed to their mission of serving students yet taxed with a job that was stressful, draining, and detrimental to work-life balance. Leaders described the unique nature of their roles and their decision-making amidst competing demands that never left everyone happy. They were grateful for like-minded partners and found collaboration and time with students rewarding. As for the pre-post surveys, three of the subscales (hope, optimism, and exhaustion) had statistically significant improvements between the pre and post-test. The largest changes occurred on the psychological capital inventory with hope and optimism both having an increase of around 10%. The exhaustion scale also decreased by a similar magnitude of around 10%.

Significance. This research could help identify specific new professional development practices for school leaders and inform the development of professional development programs that promote effective school leadership.

Transforming Principal Preparation: Equity-Focused Residency Program’s Impact on Leadership Development and Student Outcomes

Saturday, 5th July - 09:30: Parallel Session 2 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 101

Dr. Fernando Valle (Texas Tech University), Dr. Sarah De La Garza (Texas Tech University), Dr. Irma Almager (Texas Tech University), Dr. Vanessa de Leon (Texas Tech University), Dr. Dusty Palmer (Texas Tech University)

The Principal Residency Preparation Program (PRPP) examined in this study is recognized as one of the leading models for principal preparation both within the state and nationally. Initiated as a pilot project during the 2012-2013 academic year, the current PRPP revolutionized job-embedded preparation by establishing one of the state’s first principal residency program. This student-centered initiative, crafted by the Educational Leadership faculty, employs a collaborative coaching model designed to equip graduates with the skills and dispositions necessary to support historically marginalized student populations, both in their residency placements and future leadership roles. Program faculty holistically coach the principal residents in numerous aspects of skill-building, including school improvement, equity-driven data analysis, progress monitoring instruction, and implementing instructional leadership best practices. Faculty draw from leader-member exchange theory to shape program preparation experiences and frame mentor coaching conversations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schyns, & Day, 2010). The characteristics of these high-quality exchanges include building trusting relationships and instructional coaching during the 15-month job-embedded principal residency. A provision of the competency-based curriculum is the advocacy and instructional support of stakeholders who engage with historically marginalized students.

The university faculty integrated leader-member exchange theory into practice to support equity-driven leadership around five pillars: personalized mentorship, focus on equity, collaborative learning, professional development, feedback, and reflection. Several practices operationalize these five pillars, including assigned faculty supervisors to partner districts, equity audits (Skrla et al., 2016), campus-based accountability monitoring framework, professional learning communities, individual coaching sessions, and end-of-year competency-based curriculum impact showcases. Throughout the program, students are required to use their equity audits and campus monitoring frameworks to identify areas of inequities and develop quarterly goals to monitor growth. These artifacts are the principal resident’s opportunity to demonstrate their competency in monitoring the achievement of historically marginalized students, improving teacher instructional practice, and curriculum implementation. The ultimate residency goal is for aspiring principals to develop culturally responsive school leadership competencies (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Using five years of student artifacts from conducted equity audits, campus-based accountability monitoring frameworks, and end-of-year competency-based impact demonstrations, the team explores the following research questions:

- In what ways did university faculty bridge gaps of theoretical knowledge and practical application utilizing equity tools and campus-based accountability frameworks?
- How did the principal residents’ progress monitoring of quarterly goals shift during their placement?
- How did the campus accountability data reflect these quarterly goal shifts to support the instructional growth of historically marginalized student populations?

Findings reveal that the faculty’s data-driven and personalized coaching results in residents’ increased capacity to coach teachers to improve student results. The residents documented their coaching strategies with teachers in several areas that ultimately impact and improve student attendance, academic achievement, and behaviors. Throughout their residency, the aspiring principals model collaboration, communication, and advocacy with

campus stakeholders to impact historically marginalized students’ performance at the student, teacher, and campus levels.

Navigating the Turbulences of Anti-DEI legislation in the United States

Saturday, 5th July - 09:45: Parallel Session 2 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 131

Dr. MARIO JACKSON (Florida State University)

Mandates for school leaders to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population through equity-oriented approaches have resulted in increased attention to leadership preparation programs (Young et al., 2021). Preparation programs are encouraged to prioritize teachers from historically underrepresented groups and those with established understanding of equity through their recruitment (Barakat et al., 2021; McKenzie et al., 2008), foster students’ engagement with critical perspectives (Gooden & Dantley, 2012), and prioritize faculty with equity/social justice commitments (Jacobs et al., 2013). Concomitant with these recommendations are recent policy changes at the federal and state levels seeking to thwart efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across higher education institutions (Schoorman & Gatens, 2024). Because principal preparation programs are housed in higher education institutions, some of the recommendations for preparing school leaders for equity might be at odds with recent legislative attacks.

If principal preparation programs are expected to embrace mandates to prepare school leaders to promote equity for marginalized students, it is important to understand how policies that attack diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) impacts their equity-oriented agency. Thus, the current study uses Giddens’s (1984) structure-agency theory to explore how preparation program faculty perceive and navigate the influences of anti-DEI legislation on their agency to prepare school leaders for equity?

A qualitative exploratory approach guided this research. Exploratory qualitative studies allow researchers to “build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 68). Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively sample faculty from 13 principal preparation program across North Carolina. Through qualitative content analysis, the analysis proceeded iteratively, involving a combination of inductive and deductive approaches.

Preliminary findings recognize the constraining influences of anti-DEI policies on programs’ agency, mandating their decentering of race and equity throughout their operations. As shared by participants, the Supreme Court’s ruling on Affirmative Action outlawed admission considerations based on race, thus forcing faculty to reconsider how they recruit diverse aspiring leaders. Kelly also explained how programs’ ability to prioritize individuals with equity commitment have also been restricted due to the university system’ Compelled Speech policy, which restricts institutions from asking student and faculty applicants questions about their ideological beliefs (i.e., attitudes towards equity, etc). On the other hand, the state’s political landscape also creates challenges for programs’ agency to facilitate students’ development of critical consciousness. As Andre explained, because course materials can be requested by the public (open records access), there is fear among some faculty, discouraging them from infusing critical perspectives throughout their courses.

These add invaluable insights to the literature on principal preparation programs’ equity-oriented agency in the midst of anti-DEI legislation and will be of interest to those in leadership preparation and development. An understanding of this tension is critical if we are to support and expand preparation programs’ equity-oriented agency. Relevant to the conference theme, my examination of how anti-DEI legislation constrain preparation programs’ ability to prepare school leaders for equity will contribute invaluablely to discussions around turbulent forces affecting higher education.

**Symposium - The
leadership demands of
early-career teachers:
global perspectives**

The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives - Australia

Saturday, 5th July - 09:00: Symposium - The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 66

Dr. Helen Goode (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne)

This presentation is part of a symposium focused on the leadership demands of early-career teachers. This international research project is part of the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN). Schools are increasingly complex organisations and research on leadership in schools is capturing this complexity (Harris & Jones, 2017; 2022; Ziebell et al., 2020). Whilst leadership from principals remains important and continues to be studied (Louis, et al., 2010; Grissom, et al. 2021), there is now significant research that explores middle and teacher leadership (Bryant et al., 2020; Harris, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2022; Lipscombe et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2016). There is also an expectation that teachers have an organisational leadership role, and there is a burgeoning research focus on teacher leaders (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) to the point that this has surpassed research on middle leaders (Harris & Jones, 2017). At the initial teacher education (ITE) level, teacher preparation programs are now beginning to include leadership subjects to better prepare new teachers for these increased leadership expectations (Acquaro, 2019). It is, therefore, timely to consider the leadership work and the leadership demands on new teachers in their first years of teaching.

This study sought to understand the leadership demands beginning teachers face through their first years of work through exploring what new teachers are asked to do, and actually do, in terms of leadership practices, and any influence this may have on their career aspirations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews of 20 recent graduates of teacher education programs from Australian universities who were in their first to fourth year of teaching. Interviews were conducted online and later transcribed and then coded to build thematic understandings.

Findings from the study highlight early-career pressure from schools for beginning teachers to take-on leadership responsibilities in addition to developing their teacher expertise. Findings revealed that by the time early-career teachers (ECTs) were in their third or fourth year, they had been asked to apply for a formal leadership role, or were already acting in one. As a result of fragile work security in the sector, those ECTs who had been or were on contracts described how they accepted leadership roles in the hope that this would lead to more secure and permanent work. The study has also captured the leadership work that ECTs self-initiated as part of their desire to support students and their schools.

The scope and significance of this study fits within the Educational Leadership Network and is closely linked with the following conference sub-themes:

- Exploring the evolving research and evidence base for leadership education and capacity building
- Policy and practice learning to support teacher and school leader development

The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives - New Zealand

Saturday, 5th July - 09:15: Symposium - The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 120

Dr. Isaac Day (University of Canterbury), Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne)

This presentation is part of a symposium focused on the leadership demands of early-career teachers (ECTs). This research project is part of the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN).

Early findings from New Zealand suggest that ECTs’ conceptualisations of leadership and leadership activity strongly influence whether they perceive themselves to be involved in leadership. This, in turn, shapes the demands placed upon them in enacting leadership roles. Many ECTs view leadership as a formal and positional endeavour, affecting their perceptions of responsibility and the expectations placed on them. Those undertaking formal leadership roles at this early career stage often receive limited support from their schools or the wider education system. Consequently, they navigate the challenges of leading professional practice among their peers—often facing complex interpersonal dynamics—without structured guidance or mentorship.

In contrast, ECTs who actively sought or had access to informal leadership mentors appeared better equipped to interpret and manage leadership challenges. These teachers demonstrated greater optimism about their leadership responsibilities, suggesting that mentorship plays a crucial role in mitigating the challenges associated with early career teacher leadership demands.

The demands on ECTs in New Zealand must also be understood within the broader socio-political context of ongoing government reforms in education, placing increasing demands on schools. These reforms position some ECTs as prominent figures in leading change—whether by helping colleagues interpret policy shifts, facilitating the implementation of new teaching practices, or reporting on their impact to school leadership. This expectation necessitates expertise in monitoring and evaluation, alongside strong pedagogical and relational competencies. However, many ECTs report feeling underprepared for these responsibilities, experiencing significant tension between the demands of leadership and their perceived readiness. Some expressed growing anxiety about their leadership roles, leading to doubts about their long-term aspirations in leadership.

These early findings highlight the pressing need for more structured leadership development and mentorship opportunities for ECTs to ensure that leadership demands do not undermine their professional confidence and career aspirations.

The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives - Spain

Saturday, 5th July - 09:30: Symposium - The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 121

*Dr. Cristina Moral-Santaella (University of Granada), Dr. Reyes Hernández-Castilla (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid),
Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne)*

This presentation is part of a symposium focused on the leadership demands of early-career teachers. This international research project is part of the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN). Preliminary findings suggest that newly qualified teachers receive no specific training in leadership tasks, nor are they informed about what it means to be a teacher leader. Although they are well received and accepted within their schools, leadership development is not actively promoted.

While there is a climate of trust, departmental groups often prioritise their own interests over those of the school as a whole. More experienced teachers primarily assist new teachers with bureaucratic matters rather than teaching and learning issues. Excessive administrative demands further limit their professional growth, as they rely on senior colleagues for guidance on paperwork while addressing pedagogical challenges independently. Although headteachers offer support, a genuine professional learning community is lacking.

When discussing teacher leadership, they refer to a “leader in learning,” primarily within their classroom. They perceive their training as inadequate, with some feeling they have been prepared only as “purely academic teachers” rather than as classroom leaders who inspire students. Leadership tasks assigned to them are formal and delegated rather than emerging organically. Their main concern is being effective classroom leaders, yet attempts to introduce new ideas are often obstructed by bureaucratic hurdles, diminishing their motivation to innovate.

In considering change or improvement, they also factor in their temporary status. Without a permanent position, they tend to avoid potential conflicts, further restricting opportunities for professional growth. The broader education system itself imposes limitations that hinder school-level change and improvement.

This study is expected to highlight the crucial role of educational leadership in shaping the experiences and professional growth of newly qualified teachers. Findings will likely reveal that novice teachers perceive leadership as disconnected from their roles, primarily because its significance within schools is not well recognised. Leadership is often viewed as a bureaucratic function focused on administrative tasks rather than guidance, support, or pedagogical innovation. Although they may lead small projects, they do not see themselves as leaders.

The lack of leadership training and the absence of professional development programmes leave new educators unprepared for school management, pedagogical leadership, and organisational development. As a result, they experience insecurity and reluctance towards leadership roles. Furthermore, excessive administrative workloads overshadow their focus on teaching, making leadership appear impractical as a career path.

The pressures of adapting quickly to school dynamics, managing classrooms effectively, and meeting institutional expectations make leadership seem an additional burden. The undervaluation of leadership roles, combined with a lack of incentives and recognition, reinforces this perception. Additionally, the absence of inspiring leadership models within schools prevents newly qualified teachers from envisioning themselves in such positions.

Often, they are expected to take on informal leadership roles, such as peer mentoring or implementing new methodologies, without the necessary support or training. Finally, the difficult working conditions and high stress levels experienced by current leaders make leadership roles even less appealing.

The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives - USA

Saturday, 5th July - 09:45: Symposium - The leadership demands of early-career teachers: global perspectives (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 122

Dr. Suzy Hardie (University of South Carolina), Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne)

This presentation is part of a symposium focused on the leadership demands of early-career teachers. This international research project is part of the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN). Each paper will share preliminary findings from an international study examining the leadership demands experienced by 50 early-career teachers (ECTs) in Australia, New Zealand, Spain, and USA. The study explores leadership tasks new teachers undertake or are required to undertake and how these influence their career aspirations. Using a qualitative methodology, we conducted semi-structured interviews with ECTs across the four countries, which were transcribed and coded to identify individual and collective themes.

Preliminary findings reveal commonalities and contextual differences in the leadership demands faced by ECTs. Internal and external pressures to assume leadership roles were noted, affecting participants’ willingness or unwillingness to pursue leadership positions. The research also documents instances where ECTs initiated leadership activities to support students and their schools.

This study’s international scope aligns with the objectives of the BELMAS conference, offering critical insights into early-career teacher leadership. Furthermore, the symposium provides an opportunity to invite conference participants to engage with and contribute to this ongoing ISLDN research initiative.

Parallel Session 3

Implementing a culture of evidence-informed education at all level in secondary education in The Netherlands

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 201

Mr. Ben Vriesema (Jac. P. Thijsse College)

Leadership plays a vital role in implementing a culture of evidence-informed education. School leaders must prioritize the use of research and data in decision-making processes and provide the necessary support, resources, and time for teachers to engage with evidence. But working within an organization in which there was no direct urge felt by staff and personnel to establish a culture of evidence-informed education is not a sinecure. How to implement a culture of evidence-informed education, was one of the central questions in this study. This study shows that in four small steps a culture of evidence-informed education was established in secondary schools in The Netherlands. Small steps which have led to a giant leap forward.

First step was to ensure educational leaders took actions at different levels: collaboration among educators is a cornerstone of evidence-informed practice. By creating collaborative professional learning communities (PLC's) teachers can provide a platform to share research findings and collectively analyze data to improve their teaching strategies.

Second step was to bring research-knowledge into schools to show the effects of certain studies. Leaders in educational research were asked to discuss their findings in micro-, macro- and metasettings with teachers and educational leaders. Encourage teachers to test and adjust their teaching methods based on evidence of what works best for their students. Simultaneously the position of an 'auctor' was created. An 'auctor' is a secondary education professor. The 'auctor' is working together with teachers, a data-driven-team and school leaders who have together formed a 'research-knowledge circle'. Signs, regular newsletters and organizing moments of the PLC's to discuss on the process and the research are vital at this point.

The third step was of major importance: all of the teachers were 'seduced' into research by filling out a questionnaire about the *well-being* of the students. Presumably it was this step that would make the giant leap forward: teachers are concerned about the well-being of their students, so gathering information, comparing and sharing data, all became part of the implementing process. School leaders explained and informed teachers not only about the *how*, but mainly about the *why* of the research questionnaire. Educational leaders at this point of the process are the paragons and cornerstones of the process. Their role must be visible for everyone within school. The last step is the one in which school leaders integrate the research findings. By showing data in a general meeting, teachers could experience the necessity of research in a school. School leaders can equip teachers with the tools to better understand the link between evidence and practice, thus enhancing the quality and relevance of their teaching methods and establish a culture of evidence-informed education.

In the presentation all four steps and results are highlighted and research results are explained with a data and a number of examples.

The changing role of the headteacher in England post academisation

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 186

Mr. Jack Lewis (Inspired Education), Dr. Deborah Outhwaite (BELMAS), Dr. Claire Tupling (AQA), Dr. Mark Gibson (Oxford Brookes University), Dr. Giuliana Ferri (University College London)

The schooling landscape in England has changed significantly in the past decade as a result of 'academisation'. Academy schools have moved from being locally administered to being independently run, and directly funded by national government. Conversion to academy status has been encouraged by the government on the premise that headteachers are afforded more autonomy over their schools with more effective lines of accountability. Such schools are frequently grouped in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), more recently called School Trusts, which has consequences for leadership practice. The research in this study presents the perceptions of policy impact on the role of the headteachers working within a MAT. The participants include two primary headteachers and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the trust, a role which has emerged as a leadership position over the last decade. This article shares the leaders' views on education policy trends, particularly how this has changed the central team, the MAT, and how collaboration within the trust has changed the role of the headteacher. This unique research examined a trust that has gone through that process and records the altering dynamics of a leadership team as a consequence.

Cultivating Connection: Professional Networks as Anchors for New and Experienced Principals

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 220

Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Susanne Sahlin (Mid Sweden University)

The preparation and development of principals is a widely researched topic globally. From mandatory national courses to self-directed initiatives, the increasing complexity of the principal's role and declining interest in it underscore the urgency of their development and support. Principal preparation can occur externally through university programs or internally via activities like shadowing experienced leaders. External professional preparation programs, whether mandated or voluntary, offer aspiring and new principals opportunities to form professional networks, which are critical for their preparation and ongoing development. For instance, a recent Swedish study highlights the value school leaders place on engaging with peers during professional learning, demonstrating the importance of these interactions beyond formal courses (Sahlin, 2023).

This study extends earlier research on Australian and Swedish principals' perceptions of their leadership preparation by examining the role of professional networks in the development of both new and experienced principals. The guiding research question is: (1) How have professional networks assisted school leaders in their development as a principal? Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 20 Australian and Swedish principals and analysed using data condensation, display, and verification techniques (Miles et al., 2020). The analysis revealed several key themes regarding the value of professional networks and their diverse contributions to principals' roles.

Preliminary findings from Australian data emphasise the importance principals place on networks formed early in their careers. For new principals, professional networks serve as **anchors for stability**, providing critical support for navigating challenges such as staff management, trust-building, and decision-making. Conversely, experienced principals value networks for maintaining their sense of belonging, reducing professional isolation, and supporting their wellbeing, serving as **anchors for sustainability**. These findings align with existing literature on the significance of professional networks (Daniëls et al., 2019; Huber, 2011).

Swedish principals similarly highlight the pivotal role of networking in their professional journeys. Networking, particularly during principal training, was viewed as essential for building professional connections and fostering collaboration. For principals in isolated roles, these networks provided valuable peer interaction and support. A critical theme that emerged was the role of professional networks in developing principals' confidence and shaping their professional identities. The Swedish National Principal Training Program (NPTP) was especially impactful, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening leadership assurance.

Overall, this study demonstrates the multifaceted role of professional networks in principal development. For new principals, networks provide foundational support to manage the complexities of leadership. For experienced principals, they promote resilience, professional confidence, and a sense of community. These findings underscore the value of fostering professional networks throughout a principal's career to enhance leadership capacity and wellbeing.

The Effect of Change Leadership on Teacher Commitment and Inclusive Practices in Oman

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 41

Dr. Yasser Al-Mahdy (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University), Dr. Fayrouz Elwakil (Tanta University)

The Emerging research highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping teacher practices and fostering commitment to inclusive education. However, a notable gap remains in the literature concerning the specific mechanisms through which change leadership influences teachers' commitment to inclusion and their implementation of inclusive practices, particularly in non-Western educational contexts. While previous studies have explored the impact of leadership on inclusive education, empirical evidence on this relationship within the Arab world -particularly in Oman- remains scarce. Given the increasing policy emphasis on inclusive education in Oman, a deeper understanding of how leadership fosters teachers' commitment to inclusion is crucial for driving sustainable educational reform.

This study addresses this gap by examining a mediated-effects model that explores the relationship between change leadership and teachers' inclusive practices, with affective commitment to inclusion as a key mediating variable. The study surveyed 501 teachers working in public schools implementing inclusive education programs for students with disabilities in Oman. Participants completed validated instruments, including the Change Leadership Scale, Affective Commitment Scale, and Inclusive Practices Scale. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that change leadership significantly enhances teachers' commitment to inclusion, which, in turn, positively influences their implementation of inclusive practices. Moreover, results indicate that change leadership exerts both direct and indirect effects on teachers' inclusive practices, with affective commitment acting as a significant mediator.

These findings emphasize the importance of school leaders cultivating change leadership competencies and fostering teachers' commitment to inclusive education. Given the limited research on change leadership in inclusive education within the Arab region, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and researchers seeking to enhance inclusive educational environments. The study emphasizes the need for professional development programs that strengthen school leaders' abilities in transformational and participatory leadership to effectively support and sustain inclusive education initiatives.

By addressing a significant gap in the literature and providing empirical evidence from Oman, this study contributes to the global discourse on the intersection of change leadership, teacher commitment, and inclusive practices, particularly in underrepresented educational contexts.

Keywords: Change Leadership, Teacher Commitment, Inclusive Practices, Oman, Inclusive Schools.

Parallel Session 3

Operationalising Leadership Vision: Agile, Lean, and AI Strategies for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 275

Mrs. LOGAYNA SADIG A KERWAT (University of Birmingham), Dr. Aziza Mahomed (University of Birmingham), Dr. Daniel L. Donaldson (University of Birmingham)

Amid escalating accountability pressures in higher education, this study investigates how visionary leadership can be practically embedded into teaching and learning practices through the integration of Agile management and Lean production methodologies drawn from the engineering industry. The study introduces the concept of “Artificial Wisdom” in the HE context, a cyclical process wherein leadership vision, dynamic methodologies, and generative AI collaboratively enhance the learning experience, aiming to translate strategic goals into tangible assessment outcomes.

The research examines the interplay between leadership vision, Agile processes, and Lean quality in shaping educational environments based on experiments with an existing AI model and staff interviews. While these methodologies focus on efficiency, continuous improvement, and accreditation requirements, the study assesses their applicability and limitations when transferred from industrial contexts to educational settings. The authors are aware of the potential oversimplification of complex pedagogical processes and the risk of undermining educational values with industrial efficiency models. This is another reason to look at the challenges of aligning these methodologies with the inherently human-centric nature of teaching and learning.

The central research question addresses how integrating Agile and Lean methodologies, augmented by generative AI, can foster Artificial Wisdom to bridge the gap between strategic leadership and daily educational practices. This inquiry is grounded in theoretical frameworks, incorporating principles from management manifestos and educational leadership theories while evaluating the assumptions underlying these models and their compatibility with UK educational paradigms.

Furthermore, generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) are explored as the main contributors to advancing assessment practices within this research framework. Combining AI technologies with the educational process and addressing career requirements, the study demonstrates how LLMs can be fostered, effectively enhancing university assessment and feedback mechanisms.

This work presents a conceptual model that integrates visionary leadership, Agile practices, and emerging AI technologies to offer a perspective on navigating current and future challenges in higher education through continuous improvement and sustainable practices.

Initial results indicate that while the application of these technologies and methodologies can promote a responsive, student-centred learning environment and foster a culture of continuous improvement, they also raise significant concerns. These include the potential erosion of pedagogical autonomy. The implications of this research are significant for the use of AI in assessments and feedback and for leadership effectiveness in higher education. It suggests a model that supports leadership development, sustainability, and the continuous alignment of institutional goals with teaching and learning practices, but it calls for a cautious and critical approach.

School Inspections and Headteachers’ Professional Dissonance: Rethinking how we assess school success.

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 290

Ms. Madelaine Baker (Glasgow City Council), Ms. Alison Mitchell (University of Glasgow)

Introduction

This paper explores the early findings from phase one of a research study of headteachers’ recent experiences of His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) school inspections in Scotland. The author is a researcher participant and a current head teacher in Scotland. The paper will consider whether reports on schools in disadvantaged areas have common themes in terms of the language and gradings of the reports and compare this with the language and gradings of less disadvantaged schools.

Rationale:

Teaching unions in England have raised concerns regarding England’s Education Inspection framework following the death of a primary head teacher in January 2023 which was directly linked to the grading process and inadequacies in the process itself (Judiciary, 2023). This tragedy caused shock and disappointment and caused the profession to question the process in terms of supporting improvement and the impact that it can have on school leaders and school communities (National Education Union, 2023).

These concerns are:

1. The reductive nature of the ‘grading’ of schools and the language used in reports
2. The impact of the inspection model on the well-being of school leaders and school communities.

Schools in more deprived areas are more likely to receive a poorer inspection result (Jerrim & Jones, 2024) and, as a result, the grading of the report and the impact that this can have on school leaders and school communities can be negative.

Significance to Educational Leadership:

The aims of the first phase of the study are:

- To analyse language around learning and teaching, and attainment, in inspection reports conducted in schools situated in areas of deprivation.
- To compare gradings and consider the impact of these on school leaders and school communities.

Methodology:

A comparative discourse analysis (CDA) was conducted of 5 HMIE reports gathered from state schools which have 70%+ learners who live in quintile 1 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and 5 reports from (state) schools which have fewer than 30% of learners living in SIMD quintile 1. The reports were taken between the years _____. The study considered the language and the grading in the areas of learning, teaching and attainment.

Findings:

The findings of the study focus on the themes drawn from the CDA of the language of the inspection reports around learning and teaching and attainment. The author highlights disparities between the language of the reports on learning and teaching between schools in disadvantaged areas and schools with less disadvantage. A further comparison is made around the gradings alongside the language. Phase two of the study will begin to consider the impact of disparity on school leaders and school communities.

The Key Role Of Mentorship in Early Years' Heads' Professional Development Trajectories: Early Impact Of a University and District Partnership Programme

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 273

Ms. Marie McQuade (University of Glasgow), Ms. Heather Douglas (Glasgow City Council), Ms. Angela McConalogue (Glasgow City Council), Ms. Alison Mitchell (University of Glasgow)

A significant concern in many education systems internationally, is the recruitment to and retention of sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners and leaders in Early Years (EY) establishments. This is a longstanding global issue and Scotland's system is no exception. Research consistently shows that effective leadership is one of the most significant contributors to high quality early years services. Early years leaders navigate complex roles, juggling pedagogical leadership, operational management, family support and staff development. Evidence indicates that among the 'survival skills' for new leaders in the EY sector, mentoring for early years heads can support emotional wellbeing, professional confidence and competence of leaders, especially those new to the field. In addition, for system development and to meet policy intention, mentoring helps identify and nurture emerging leaders, providing personalised and contextualised development opportunities that traditional centralised training cannot match.

This paper reports firstly on findings from the authors' research with experienced early years heads in Scotland. Crucially, there is a need for mentoring support to be structured as an entitlement, with value placed on mentoring through allocation of resources and spaces for critical conversations about the challenges of headship. Secondly, the paper reports on a district and university partnership in Scotland: *The Early Years Heads Mentoring Programme* from the perspectives of the University researchers, a district lead and EY heads. Development of the programme was supported by learning from the experience of colleagues in the Republic of Ireland, and lessons from the district's mentoring programme for school principals. The rationale and content of the programme was underpinned by this learning, from research indicating the value of mentoring to address leadership wellbeing and development and also formative evaluation data from the first cohort of mentors. The programme involves:

- **Full training for mentors:** ongoing professional learning for experienced EY heads in the district;
- **Mentoring** for all new EY heads, as an entitlement in the district;
- **System leadership** opportunity for the mentoring design team (comprising representatives from the university, district and schools);
- **Iterative learning system design.**

Finally, the paper will present research methods and findings to date on the impact of the partnership programme, through a formative evaluation process. This research amplifies the voices of long-serving heads (mentors), new heads (mentees) and the mentoring design team (experienced heads) in six impact criteria around experience of the partnership, professional growth and practice, development of new skills and knowledge, confidence and wellbeing, motivation and job-satisfaction, and impact on student learning in schools and in the wider education system. The findings have implications for early years headship support and continued professional learning, in particular relating to the design of mentoring or similar programmes at a local or national level. There are also propositions for the BELMAS community around how such a partnership may change the perception and representation of the EY Head role, raising parity of esteem across the education sector in a time when the recruitment and retention are deemed by the OECD, World Bank, and Scottish Government to be at crisis level.

Improving literacy teaching and promoting collaboration: insights from an evaluation of a place-based programme in a remote rural context in England

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 207

Dr. Natallia Yakavets (University of Nottingham), Prof. Toby Greany (University of Nottingham), Dr. Mike Adkins (University of Nottingham)

The achievement of equity is influenced not only by teachers’ practice, the curriculum and in-school factors but also the complex range of interacting processes that influence pupils and the life of the school, including socio-economic factors, culture, government policies, etc. (Ainscow et al, 2012). Schools in remote geographical areas, suffering from deprivation and cultural isolation, often have limited access to resources, including high quality leaders and teachers. This paper presents the results of the final year of evaluation of the Western Excellence in Learning and Leadership (WELL) initiative (Greany et al, 2022; 2024; forthcoming). This three-year (2021-24) place-based programme aimed to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, across isolated and deprived areas on the west coast of Cumbria. A core thrust of WELL’s initiatives was to use evidence-informed approaches to improve pupil attainment; provide high quality, research led professional development and proven intervention programmes; and provide curriculum enrichment opportunities for the most vulnerable pupils.

The paper draws on data from interviews with system leaders, school leaders and teachers (21 participants) in six case study schools. These data were collected over two field trips along with follow up interviews between February and June 2024. Specifically, the paper explores how these schools have worked separately and, increasingly collaboratively, to enhance identification of pupils’ needs and how these can be addressed. A key area has been a shared focus on literacy interventions (e.g. Reciprocal Reading). The WELL programme has provided funding for the New Group Reading Test (NGRT). This shaped local secondary schools in their thinking about how to develop new interventions and measure their impact. It has helped to establish more external links and a joint approach with other schools, including sharing of the literacy data.

The findings show the importance of realistic ambitions and the benefits of giving school leaders and teachers the knowledge and skills to exercise professional judgement and to reflect, refine and adapt interventions where needed to better meet the needs of their school contexts. There has been a shift in school leaders’ and teachers’ thinking and attitude, with a focus on what is happening in classrooms; what consistency and quality look like, and the quality of evidence.

The paper provides an original contribution, given that very few existing studies have explored how a place-based programme in remote rural areas supports literacy interventions for disadvantaged pupils and promotes collaboration. There is a growing recognition of the value of high quality geographically specific data to inform the design of place-based programmes (Maxwell et al., 2017) and this paper is intended to add to the knowledge base.

Parallel Session 3

The Leadership Challenge: improving Professional Learning in Maltese Schools

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 27

Prof. Christopher Bezzina (University of Malta), Ms. Denise Gatt (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education)

The purpose of this paper is to contextualise the notion of leadership for learning within the Maltese context and present the challenges that the country faces to improve the level of professional learning amongst educators. It is argued that successful reform needs to start with looking at the notion of collaboration and so at different levels. Two main shifts are proposed. Firstly, a new partnership between schools as networks and central leadership is required, one that is based on new forms of governance. A second shift is that of enhancing the professional capital of teachers and leaders by focusing on nurturing schools into professional learning communities and extending it to networked learning across schools. In this way, teachers’ professionalism and professional identity are redefined. The paper will explore the role that leadership and governance have on the way we view reform and the nurturing of professional learning and development in Maltese schools. The position taken is that central to any changes requires exploring the need to nurture trust as a fundamental principle that governs the way we relate at both systems and school level. Unless a change in mindset is adopted few changes will leave an impact where it truly matters, student learning.

Weathering the storm: the impact of executive coaching on Headteachers' self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 14

Mr. Martin Kerridge (Liverpool John Moores University)

A contributing factor to the turbulent nature of leading with the context of reform and continuous change in the education sector, is a systematic failure to invest in leadership development and support, especially as the challenges of such leadership roles become more apparent in a complex and changing modern society. Such failing is leading to the problems of recruiting and retaining Headteachers, where the perceived pressures have a negative impact on leaders' sense of self-esteem and views on effectiveness and self-efficacy. The storm appears to be overwhelming.

This paper presents the findings of a year-long phenomenographic study of a group of thirteen headteachers in England who, during the year, completed an executive coaching programme.

The participants took part in two face-to-face, one-to-one interviews. The first at the commencement of the executive coaching programme and the second at the conclusion of the programme. Each interview was prefaced with a short questionnaire to reflect on self-esteem and self-efficacy, using Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and Schwarzer and Jerusalem's General Self Efficacy Scale (GSES).

The research examined whether if executive coaching is an integral element of leadership development and support, do Headteachers become more confident as leaders, better able to weather the storm? Specifically, does the impact of coaching have a tangible impact on Headteachers' confidence as reflected in their self-esteem and self-efficacy as reviewed through adaptations of RSES and GSES?

The use of Marton's phenomenographic model, an interpretivist methodology, seeks to identify the different ways in which the group of Headteachers who took part in the executive coaching programme, experienced, conceptualized and understood coaching as a phenomenon and connected this to their own perceptions of self-esteem and self-efficacy; not seeking conformity of response but rather seeing patterns of convergence and divergence to ascertain what can be learned from similarities and differences.

The paper proposes the implications the findings have for both policy and practice.

Achieving Improvement under Turbulence: The case of An Interschool Collaboration Initiative in Jordan

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 160

Mrs. Rola Katerji (American University of Beirut), Dr. Rima Karami (American University of Beirut)

There is wide agreement that sustaining school improvement in turbulent contexts require flexible and adaptive approaches. Iterative design-based approaches, such as collaborative action research, are particularly important during implementation of improvement initiatives. They involve continuous reflection and adaptation, ensuring that challenges are anticipated, and solutions remain practical and sustainable within the specific educational environment. Moreover, they allow leaders of change to navigate and influence organizational dynamics, to ensure its sustainability, alignment with the organization’s goals, and responsiveness to its turbulent context. Meanwhile, inter-school collaboration has emerged as a promising strategy for improvement. It builds professional networks that facilitate collaboration and resource sharing that are essential to cope with the uncertainties and challenges associated with change and with turbulent contexts. This includes fostering a supportive environment that addresses practitioners’ concerns and anxieties and offering emotional support. In the postcolonial states of the Arab region, many educators striving to lead improvement, operate in turbulent contexts that endure economic crises, political instability, and conflicts, making responsive and collaborative designs essential to their endeavor. Despite its promises, the practice of inter-school collaboration as strategy for school improvement is almost non-existent.

This study builds on an exploratory research that examined a rare case of an interschool collaboration among five Jordanian private schools leading improvement in a context with frequent safety and political instability. The exploration concluded with a model for interschool collaboration as a strategy for improvement that is informed by international literature yet grounded in the four-year experience of these schools.

This study examines the extent to which the components of this grounded model, and the strategies it promotes can be considered effective in achieving improvement while responding to turbulent conditions. It leans on a theoretical understanding of the existing literature on leading under crisis and reexamine the model and the data that leads to its development. Data sources included documented interviews, reflections, and project progress reports and notes collected and archived throughout the implementation of the interschool-collaboration initiative.

Findings showed that the model, grounded in a school-university partnership, emphasizes the unique role of university-based facilitators as collaborative action researchers. It supported schools through a structured inquiry cycle providing tailored expert assistance. Two main features of this inquiry-based cycle, known as the “Project” Improvement Journey, were highlighted: planning for implementation with monitoring stops where participants identified challenges, and adopting “evolving design planning” where participants refine their plans during implementation based on evidence. The model also emphasized the facilitation process that offered emotional and social support throughout the initiative, and the inclusion in a professional network with a collective vision for self-renewal. This supported skill acquisition, and reduced concerns about the uncertainty of change. Additionally, the model emphasized the importance of addressing pressing needs which are crucial in regions with instability and limited documented guidelines and policies.

This study has implications for policymakers, and action researchers by offering a framework to guide and support interschool collaboration in schools in turbulent conditions, enabling them to respond to crises while laying the foundation for continuous improvement.

Challenges of middle leadership to facilitate student learning in Hong Kong schools after the turbulent crises of the past years

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 140

Dr. Elson Szeto (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Middle teacher leadership has been interpreted differently in changing educational structures and curricula since the turbulent crises of recent years. Related teachers were expected to sustain their salient leadership roles in strengthening student learning development in schools, regardless of the crises. However, some teacher leaders realised the impact of the crises on the learning development of students in public schools. In fact, profiles of student population have changed in Hong Kong schools due to the crises. Hong Kong is a controversial city of mainland China in the Asian region. Many families have left the city to move to other parts of the world, while families from other mainland cities have been invited and accepted to settle down in the city. Thus, teacher leaders face diversified student populations in many schools and changing professional requirements in the education system. The key question is: What are the challenges to teacher leadership practices in the school hierarchy and the system since the turbulent crises? This abstract focuses on the teacher leadership practice in the subjects for secondary students in the diversified public schools of Hong Kong. A qualitative cross-case study of the challenges facing two middle teacher leaders in a public mainstream and special education school, respectively, was conducted during the educational changes since the crises. Regardless of the subjects they teach, the middle teacher leaders need to take responsibility for related policy priority across the levels of a school hierarchy commanded by the central administration. The leadership practice of the subject development for all students in alignment with school development seems to be the least priority. The case study reflects the two middle teacher leaders' views and mindsets on quality education in contrast to the educational change commanded by the central administration. Interestingly, their mindsets are split into two ideas, namely working as a teacher in a school for living in the city, and immersive teaching of teachers' equitable and justice belief in quality education for every student with various characteristics. Implications of the challenges of rethinking the vision and mission of the middle teachers' thoughts of quality education are also discussed.

Parallel Session 3

From Policy to Practice: An Examination of Headship Preparation and Development in Ghana.

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 188

Mr. Harry Asamoah-Ansah Mante (University of Nottingham)

Headship preparation and development are critical components for promoting effective educational leadership (Bush, 2018). In Ghana, policymakers are centrally involved in translating national educational policies into practical programmes to enhance school heads' leadership capabilities (Ampah-Mensah et al., 2024). This paper reports the findings of a study of the specific roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ghana Education Service (GES) in the preparation and development of school heads.

The study adopted a qualitative approach, combining semi-structured interviews with policy documents to gather data. A purposive sampling of seven policymakers: three Regional Education Directors from GES, three Policy Planning Officers, and one Senior Research Officer from the Ministry of Education provided insightful responses on the role and responsibilities of policymakers in preparing and developing school heads. The data were analysed systematically using Nvivo and reported thematically.

The findings show that the roles and responsibilities of both the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ghana Education Service (GES), in the provision of leadership development opportunities, and leadership capacity building, are intertwined and collaborative. Ministry-level responsibilities involve planning strategic leadership development policy initiatives, and research and policy evaluation, while, at the regional level, responsibilities focus on operational policy implementation in all schools, school performance monitoring and feedback to the Ministry. Broad leadership models are specified by the Ministry of Education. For example, based on needs and situational analysis, the flagship programme, National Educational Leadership Institute (NELI), is intended to focus on retraining school heads in transformational leadership.

Engagements with stakeholders is emphasised. These include local stakeholders (such as parents, chiefs, faith-based organisations, municipal authorities), which are engaged by the GES to support educational goals. The Ministry engages multilateral, bilateral, and NGO development partners in aligning school leadership programmes with national priorities.

This study provides a foundation for understanding how policymakers shape headship preparation and development in Ghana, offering implications for policymakers, school heads, and teachers to improve their leadership practice.

Illuminating the permeations, deviations and exclusions for the role of parents in the corporatised school governance: poetic cuts in a murmuration of data.

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 132

Dr. Karen Healey (The University of Manchester)

This paper responds to the call for the field of educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA) to experiment with arts-based methods. In response, I use a poetic inquiry approach to transcription, analysis and [re]presentation to explore the permeations, deviations and exclusions in discourses and practices shaping the role of parents in the governance arrangements of England’s multi-academy trusts. This study was located in three multi-academy trusts with academies located in what policy describes as ‘disadvantaged’ communities. Data was generated through a narrative interview approach. Participants included three parents from one academy in each multi-academy trust and corporate actors, such as trustees, the chief executive officer, principals and other leaders with responsibility for engaging with parents within the multi-academy trust and academy site.

Conceptualising generated data as a murmuration, I [re]turn to *cut* through it at three different places and see how these data [re]form to [re]present the complexity of participants’ lived experiences concerning the role of parents in the governance of MATs, where discursive formations shape practice but are also [re]shaped, as participants relationally enact or resist policy locally. Such a conceptualisation offers a novel way to understand the data as relational and dynamic, an understanding which is often obscured by the translations and categorisations of thematic analysis. In employing Barad’s concept of the *agential cut*, I am able to explore the [re]forming of these data within the murmuration as each cut points to the boundary where distinctions are made, as corporatised governance is materialised in these relational entanglements.

Each [poetic] *cut* entangles us (participant, researcher and reader) with the complexity of participants’ lived experiences, exploring whose knowledge matters. Adopting a poetic approach offers both form and process; a place to dwell, positioning participants’ critical agency; blurring boundaries and seeking to heal wounds of dehumanisation created through technocratic expertise and practices of corporatisation focused on performance, compliancy and risk mitigation.

In this paper I contribute firstly to the field of ELMA methodologically by extending method traditions to include arts-methods and in particular poetic inquiry. Secondly, I offer a novel way of illuminating and acknowledging the relationality of our data through the conceptualisation of the murmuration: dynamic, forming and reforming, yet bounded in togetherness. Thirdly, I make an empirical contribution to understanding parents’ positioning of themselves in the knowledge production of MAT governance the complexity of actors lived experience of corporatised governance

This study is significant internationally to the field, as it provides new insights into the complexity of knowledges that entangle to enable the dominance of corporate practices and corporate actors in school governance. Here it is not the grand claims of corporate knowledge that are revealed about governance of MATs but the lived experiences of those entangled in, with and around the embodiment of such claims. In the poetic transcripts I have been able to acknowledge not just the cognitive response to corporatised governance but the emotional response, where hope still glimmers for a role beyond that of individualism and technocratic.

Turbulence in the Workforce: The Rise of Uncertified Teachers and Its Impact on School Leadership

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 49

Prof. Katherine Mansfield (University of North Texas), Dr. Wesley Edwards (University of North Texas)

Teacher shortages and staffing challenges are major concerns for educational leaders globally. For example, in both the UK and USA, population growth expands the demand for teachers; while concurrently, teachers are leaving the profession due to heavy workload, perceived lack of respect, and low morale. This leaves head teachers, principals, and other educational leaders in vulnerable positions as they work to meet the needs of students.

National and local policy responses to this turbulence in the workforce vary across contexts. For example, some areas of the UK are experimenting with hybrid teaching schemes to attract talent. In the state of Texas (USA), the legislature has waived teacher certification requirements to address hiring shortages. In line with the BELMAS 2025 conference theme—“Turbulence, Reform and Development in Educational Leadership, Management and Administration”—this critical policy analysis investigates the development of this policy reform in a large, demographically and geographically diverse context, answering the following questions: What contextual factors led to and guided the policy change process? What is the theory of action for this policy reform? To what extent has the policy changed the characteristics of the teacher workforce? What impact has this state-wide initiative had on school leaders? What other patterns of change are emerging? How should school leaders respond?

We use critical policy analysis, which recognizes the contestable nature of problem definition and arguments for solutions. This approach calls for careful reading of political language and how these discourses are used to make sense of policy problems and solutions. We conduct document analysis (policy, legislative notes, newspapers) and utilize a large data set from the Texas Education Research Center, containing employment records of individual teachers from 2012-2013 to 2022-2023. Our data analysis is informed by Steve Gross’ Turbulence Theory, which helps us discern how stakeholders contextualize and address problems, describe changes occurring in schools during periods of reform, and make sense of leadership decision-making during times of instability and ambiguity.

Findings advance the understanding of how educational leaders’ roles shift and become more complex in a deregulatory policy context where teacher certification requirements are waived. Results also raise critical questions about the policy-making process and leadership decisions that have implications for the stability of the educator workforce. This study offers key insights to leaders across the USA, UK, and across the globe who are facing similar staffing challenges and deregulatory policy shifts and contribute to the discourse on turbulence, reform, and development in educational leadership.

Intersectional Perspectives of PK-12 Women in STEMM Educational Leadership in Ireland and the United States

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 97

Dr. Elizabeth Reilly (California State University), Dr. Mary Cunneen (University College Dublin)

Background

A small body of literature addresses women in PK-12 STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) leadership (Labov & Olsen, 2014; McKay et al., 2018; Geesa et al., 2020). The investigations on women's leadership are limited, though, and do not address the nuances of the variety of intersections that affect women in these roles.

To address the limited literature with women in PK-12 STEMM, we designed a study that used intersectionality theory (Agosto & Rowland, 2018). This theory's tenets include the recognition of these intersections as historical and able to cut across geographical spaces. It further recognizes the coexistence of oppression and privilege, or the simultaneous experience of advantages and disadvantages related to the different social class groups (Author, 2018). While gender and race typically dominate the intersections, many other factors may affect women's leadership trajectories (Author, 2018). This investigation sought to examine the progress, successes, and challenges of these women through intersections that included, but were not limited to, race and ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and professional position.

Research Aim

This qualitative study's research question was, *What are the intersections that affect the progresses, successes, and challenges of women in PK-12 STEMM leadership?*

Methods

The snowball sample included approximately 15 individuals in positions of PK-12 leadership who serve in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and/or Medicine (STEMM)-related education in Ireland and United States. Participants included individuals such as teacher leaders, curriculum specialists and directors, principals, and other PK-12 leaders.

Data gathering included video recordings and transcriptions of each one-hour Zoom interview. The interview questions sought details regarding how various intersections affected the women leaders.

Key Findings

The investigators use narrative inquiry as the tool of analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) and applied intersectionality keywords in deriving the themes. Three findings from preliminary analysis of the data are 1. STEMM women leaders in PK-12 education face similar challenges when seeking, retaining, or achieving promotion in leadership roles in the STEMM field. 2. Dominated in both countries by men, gender plays a significant role in the progress, successes, and challenges women face in STEMM leadership. 3. While race plays an important intersection with gender in United States, in Ireland, religious norms have a larger impact on Irish women leaders. We intend to present specific profiles of women we have interviewed.

Significance

While there is growing research into women in STEMM, there has been minimal empirical data related to women in PK-12 education STEMM leadership and their perceptions of their progress, successes, and challenges which are then disaggregated by a variety of intersections such as race/ethnicity, age, and position. This investigation provided an opportunity for the women to reflect on the impact of their work as leaders. The data can lead to greater justification regarding the value of programs and policies that deliberately address the recruitment and mentoring of women educational leaders in STEMM and the accompanying value of recognizing the intersectional challenges they face.

Parallel Session 3

The Politics of Identity: How ‘Latinx’ Reflects the Tension Between Academia and Culture

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 135

Mr. Abraham Cervantes (The University of Tennessee)

The emergence of “Latinx” as a gender-neutral alternative to “Latino” and “Latina” has become a significant point of contention in academic discourse, particularly regarding gender inclusivity and identity representation within the Latin American diaspora. While the term has gained considerable acceptance within academic circles, especially in student affairs and higher education, it faces notable resistance from Spanish-speaking communities who often view it as an imposed linguistic modification incompatible with Spanish language structures and cultural norms. This tension illuminates broader questions about language, power, and cultural authenticity in academic spaces, particularly in contexts where traditional linguistic practices intersect with progressive academic discourse and evolving social justice movements.

This paper employs an autoethnographic approach to examine the complex interplay between academic language practices and cultural authenticity in identity formation. Addressing the BELMAS conference strand of critical approaches to educational leadership, the central research questions addressed in this study are: How do Latinx individuals—particularly those who either embrace or reject the term—experience the tension between the academic use of “Latinx” and its cultural implications? What role does academia play in shaping or imposing identity labels on marginalized communities? and How do these labels affect personal and collective identity within these communities?

Grounded in decolonial and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, this study examines concepts of linguistic imperialism, cultural hegemony, and identity formation within marginalized groups. Through an extensive discourse analysis of existing literature and relevant online discussions, this research examines how ‘Latinx’ is received, interpreted, and contested across various academic and cultural settings. The autoethnographic methodology enables a nuanced examination of how identity labels are imposed, negotiated, and resisted, revealing language’s profound impact on identity construction. While acknowledging the study’s limitation to primarily U.S.-based perspectives, this methodological approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the personal and collective struggles faced by community members.

The study critically examines the implications for marginalized communities, particularly how academic labeling practices affect individuals’ sense of belonging and self-identification. Drawing from extensive qualitative data, it highlights the risks associated with imposing terminology that may inadvertently erase or misrepresent cultural identities. The research suggests that academic institutions should foster environments where students can choose identity terms that authentically represent their experiences, rather than enforcing uniform labels. This consideration becomes especially relevant in educational settings where diverse cultural backgrounds intersect with institutional policies and academic discourse around identity and representation.

The paper concludes by proposing a transformative framework for educational leadership that reimagines how academic institutions engage with cultural identities. This evidence-based approach outlines specific strategies for balancing gender inclusivity with cultural respect, including participatory language policy development, community-led identity initiatives, and flexible administrative practices that honor individual self-determination. Through these concrete recommendations, higher education institutions can create authentically inclusive environments that respect both cultural diversity and gender inclusivity. The findings not only contribute to discussions about linguistic justice and cultural authenticity but also provide practical guidance for educational leaders navigating the complex intersection of institutional policies, cultural identity, and inclusive practice.

Leadership, Ethos, and Diversity: Multicultural Education in Northern Ireland’s Schools

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 247

Dr. Caitlin Donnelly (Queen’s University), Dr. Lea Hubbard (Catholic University San Diego), Dr. Claire McAuley (Ulster University)

In Northern Ireland (NI), where the school system has historically been characterized by religious and cultural division, recent demographic shifts due to inward migration present new challenges and opportunities for educational leaders (DE, 2023). Although NI remains predominantly white and Christian, the rapid increase in migrant populations—particularly in urban centers like Belfast and Derry—has significantly altered the demographic profile of school communities (DE, 2023). Research on educational leadership in diverse schools emphasises the critical role leaders play in fostering inclusivity and responding to demographic changes (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Shields, 2010). However, less is known about how leaders in NI, who have limited prior exposure to racial and cultural diversity, and who lead schools characterised by distinct religious and cultural ethos, interpret and respond to these changes.

This paper draws on qualitative interviews with school leaders in a protestant and catholic school and policy makers to explore how they are navigating racial and cultural diversity within the framework of multicultural education (Banks, 2016). The findings reveal that while leaders are positively inclined toward minority ethnic students and demonstrate a willingness to adapt curricular content and pedagogical approaches which are resonant with good practice as set out by Khalife (2016) & Zembylas & Iasonos (2010) their strategies are often guided more by intuition than deliberate, evidence-based planning. This reliance on intuitive practice, reflects gaps in professional development and may inadvertently contribute to the structural marginalisation of minority students (Warner, 2018).

Moreover, the school ethos emerges as a pivotal factor that can either facilitate or hinder the development of critical leadership practices necessary to address racial diversity holistically. For instance, a school ethos rooted in social justice values may act as a bridge to fostering inclusive practices, while ethos framed around broad notions of inclusion may inadvertently reinforce systemic inequities. Despite legal frameworks such as the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and policies like Every School a Good School (DE, 2009), the findings suggest that educational leadership in NI could benefit from a strategic focus on developing multicultural awareness and critical capacity (Howard, 2010; Gay, 2002; Parkhouse et al, 2019).

The paper argues for a more intentional emphasis on leadership development that equips leaders with the knowledge and critical skills to navigate the complexities of diversity. By aligning leadership practices with the needs of increasingly diverse school communities, schools can better fulfill their mandate to promote equity and inclusivity.

Disabling inclusive leaders: how global discourses on disability inclusion shape European and national discourses on school leadership in Denmark, Germany, and Romania

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 109

Dr. Ronni Laursen (Aalborg University), Dr. Alison Milner (Aalborg University), Dr. Emily Winchip (Zayed University)

Following the widespread endorsement of global declarations, conventions and frameworks, such as the Salamanca Statement (1994), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), a discursive shift occurred in policy interpretations of inclusive education at the European and national levels. Alongside an insistence on universalism and the identification and removal of barriers to learning and participation for all students, school leadership became increasingly implicated in advancing the inclusion agenda. However, as European member states experience decreased investment in public education and, specifically, in special needs education (whether in special schools, specialist units or in mainstream schools), the materialization of these discourses in educational practices could be challenging for school leaders. Employing Foucault’s concepts of discourse and governmentality, this paper critically examines the construction of school leaders’ responsibility for fostering the inclusion of students with special educational needs and disabilities in EU and national policies in Denmark, Germany, and Romania, in the context of these wider issues of public funding. It then compares the inclusive leadership discourses with the lived experiences of three school leaders – one from each context.

The paper is based on a larger comparative research project which examines educational employer and employee organisations’ engagement in social dialogue on issues of disability inclusion. The specific objects of analysis are inclusion policies, with a focus on the role of school leadership at both the European and national levels. Our analytical approach begins with an analysis of discourses on inclusion and school leadership in Global policies, followed by an examination of how these identified discourses shape first European inclusion policies and thereafter national inclusion policies in Germany, Denmark, and Romania. This approach allows us to trace how global inclusion discourses shape the European and the national policies, revealing both similarities and differences across the three cases. The selected cases represent distinct welfare models and educational systems, which enhance our understanding of how national contexts mediate the reception and adaptation of Global and EU discourses on inclusion.

The study offers three key contributions. First, it contributes to the critical school leadership literature by examining the “regimes of truth” surrounding inclusive leadership, providing a theoretical explanation of how policies shape leaders’ understandings of what it means to be inclusive. In that sense, a critical discussion how school leaders are held accountable for transforming schools into sites that exemplify the ideals of inclusion and the embodiment of this particular vision of “excellence for all”. Second, it adds to the policy literature by demonstrating how global policies shape national practices and understandings while simultaneously transforming to fit national needs and contexts. Third, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers on how dominant discourses shape national contexts and leaders’ enactment of them differently, and the implications this has for policy development and implementation.

The challenge for leaders and their values in times of crisis

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 76

Prof. David Gurr (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Lawrie Drysdale (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Helen Goode (The University of Melbourne)

This paper reports the tensions between school principals' values and interpreting and implementing new policy and rules during a crisis (pandemic in Victoria, Australia). The findings provide lessons that have implications for principals faced with a similar challenge.

Our research on successful school leadership has demonstrated the importance of values in shaping principal leadership. Successful leaders demonstrate a range of values that include basic values (respect for others and valuing others); general moral values (empathy, social justice, equity); professional values (personal responsibility, assumptions about student learning); and social and political values (all members of the school community need to be supported). While we all have values, our research shows successful leaders can articulate them to their school community and demonstrate them through their behaviour and actions. To be authentic leaders, principals must align their values and behaviour with the situation. The pandemic created a new environment where technological, social, economic, and political forces combined to create new challenges for principal values.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption. Many jurisdictions suffered significant dislocation including in the education sector. Whole communities were put under severe restrictions for long periods with lockdowns and school closures. The state of Victoria, Australia suffered one of the longest lockdowns in the world. Here, different authorities reacted by introducing new rules and policies that changed regularly. Unfortunately, authorities in each state of Australia developed their own rules, for example, closing state borders and restricting the movement of people. The Commonwealth Government also introduced new policies and rules that were often in conflict with state governments. In schools there were often inconsistencies of rules between government and non-government schools, and between school systems. Schools were closed and reopened depending on recommendations of different authorities. Principals became the main actors in interpreting the rules and guiding their students, teachers, and the broader school community through a new rules-based regime.

The circumstances of the pandemic were so profound that in some schools, authority, decision making, and communication became centralised so the message was consistent. There were many tensions, for example, between the need to enforce rules for teachers who refused to be vaccinated and the safety of the school community. There was tension in supporting all members of the school community, respecting others, serving social justice, creating a safe environment, and implementing strict rules.

As part of a research study for the International Successful Leadership Development Network (ISLDN) we interviewed six principals who led their school during the pandemic and beyond, whose values were challenged at the time of crisis and had to balance the demands of the situation against their own ethical and moral values. While the pandemic is over, there remain learnings for school leaders who may face similar challenges. Our findings show the dilemma faced by leaders who need to choose between upholding their values, compromising their values or re-accessing their values.

Parallel Session 3

Unravelling the complexity of international school leadership: Towards a critical realist methodology

Saturday, 5th July - 10:45: Parallel Session 3 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 283

Dr. Nidal Al Haj Sleiman (Ulster University)

This paper presents a mixed methodological approach driven by a critical realist paradigm in international school leadership research. The increasing complexity of international schools demands additional research with multiple approaches to capture the contextual factors affecting their growth and desirability phenomena. In addition, research on leadership in this context shows that most of these studies use qualitative data, particularly from interviews and case studies. This study employs a critical realist approach where social realities are historical, situated and contextualised. Critical realism does not only examine observable empirical data but also uses different methods and investigates the connection between various data sets. It also engages in relevant theoretical analysis that enables a critical discussion of the findings and allows the construction of alternative realities through transformative arguments and narrative. This study uses a mixed-methods approach that involves a wide-scale survey with 50 international school principals in England and Qatar, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 senior and middle school leaders, 10 teachers, and 24 high school students, in addition to field analysis and document analysis of five case study schools. The data was collected from different participant groups and interpreted independently, then combined and analysed across all case study schools, methods and participant groups.

A critical realist approach allows a multilayered analysis that addresses the three layers of reality: the empirical (what is said and observed), the actual (the connection between phenomena, perceptions and observations) and the real (the causal mechanisms driving these phenomena, behaviours and perceptions). Mixed methodologies driven by a critical realist approach examine school leaders' behaviours, dispositions and perspectives, capture patterns of commonalities or differences across data sets, and drive a deeper level of analysis. Using this approach resulted not only in significant methodological contributions but also theoretical ones, such as unravelling the complex historical, socio-cultural and political economy factors underpinning the development of schools and the challenges encountered by their leaders and their communities. In addition, the analysis enabled counter constructions, driven by the data, that envision an alternative future of international education in highly diverse contexts that incorporate transformative and socio-culturally informed leadership approaches.

Mapping the knowledge base on destructive leadership in educational institutions: A systematic review of published research literature

Saturday, 5th July - 11:00: Parallel Session 3 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 224

Prof. Rashid Alfahadi (Sultan Qaboos University)

Destructive leadership exemplifies the darker aspects of leadership seen across various organizations, including educational ones. This leadership approach is known by various names such as toxic, authoritarian, aggressive, autocratic, Machiavellian, narcissistic, deviant, destructive, abusive leadership. It involves deliberate actions by a supervisor, manager, or leader designed to harm their subordinates or the organization. This can lead to negative followers' outcomes, ultimately damaging the overall health and effectiveness of an organization (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Research on destructive leadership has grown significantly in recent years (Mackey et al., 2021; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). However, although existing reviews have focused on destructive leadership research in non-educational settings, the educational sector has been notably underexplored. Hence, study aims to bridge this gap by systematically reviewing the existing literature on destructive leadership within educational institutions at all levels, including K-12 and higher education. Using systematic review methods, this topographical review seeks to identify and synthesize key characteristics of knowledge production in the field, focusing on the volume of publications, their development over time, geographical distribution, types of studies, research methodologies, and topical coverage. Inclusion and exclusion criteria will be applied to locate eligible sources, using a keyword search across major scholarly databases such as Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Identified sources will be carefully examined to extract information relevant to answering the following research questions:

1. What is the volume of published research on destructive leadership within educational institutions, and how has it developed over time?
2. What is the geographical distribution of studies on destructive leadership in educational institutions?
3. What types of studies (empirical, conceptual, research reviews) have been conducted on destructive leadership in educational institutions?
4. At which educational levels (K-12, higher education) are studies of destructive leadership most frequently conducted?
5. What are the common research methods used in studies of destructive leadership in educational settings?
6. What are the main topics studied in the literature on destructive leadership in educational institutions?

Extracted data will be entered into a spreadsheet to facilitate descriptive, quantitative analysis. The results will be discussed in light of existing literature, and recommendations for further development will be provided. It is expected that by providing a clear understanding of how research on destructive leadership is conducted within educational settings, this review will contribute to the existing knowledge base in this important field.

The task of leading complex schools during major change: The case of established traditional international schools in Europe that have been acquired by a private equity company.

Saturday, 5th July - 11:15: Parallel Session 3 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 84

Dr. Tristan Bunnell (University of Bath), Mr. Gavin Williams (University of Bath)

The number of private K-12 English-medium international schools continues to grow, at a rate of 2.2 schools per day, reaching 14,500 in July 2024. Amidst growth there has been major fundamental changes to the landscape. The majority of schools are now based in Asia and Middle East, serving the interests of local parents. Another change since 1995 has been the growth of commercially driven branded chains of schools such as Nord Anglia, and Cognita. At least 35% of all schools now belong to such a grouping. An under-reported aspect of this shift has been the acquisition by these chains owned and controlled by private equity companies of well-established international schools. Traditionally, these schools were relatively autonomous and owned by families or parents, and operated within an idealistic, non-profit environment delivering the programmes of the International Baccalaureate. This relatively sudden and unexpected governance and ownership shift has added substantially to the complexity of leadership of international schools, which have always been acknowledged to be complex, evolving, loosely linked systems. We present findings from a Doctoral study which involved interviewing 12 expatriate senior leaders who had extensive experience of leading this transition within four major chains of schools in four European nations. Some even had experience of their school being acquired by two different groupings, revealing the extent of turbulence within the landscape. We present for discussion five major institutional legitimacy tensions that have emerged from the study, involving reforms to the norms, procedures, and identity of the schools; in summary, these tensions are philosophical, operational, market, relational, and affectual. The findings will be of interest to members of the BELMAS International and Comparative Education Research Interest Group, as well as those interested in transitions of schools more generally within networks and groupings such as Multi-Academy Trusts.

Developing Sustainable Organizational Change in Schools Through the Application of Normalisation Process Theory

Saturday, 5th July - 11:30: Parallel Session 3 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 105

Prof. Philip Wood (Nottingham Trent University)

Normalization Process Theory (NPT) (May and Finch, 2009) focuses on the nature of the work which has to be done to embed and normalise new day-to-day practice. It does this by focusing on four elements, 1) Coherence – understanding the nature of the work and how it will be different, 2) Cognitive Participation – who will do the work and how they will enact their roles, 3) Collective Action – how the work will be done, including the resources required to bring the change, including time, 4) Reflexive Monitoring – how the work is understood and how it is adapted in context to ensure embedding of new practices and normalisation of amended work patterns.

This project focused on understanding how leaders and organisations enact change by using NPT as a framework for change. We worked with leaders and staff members in two primary schools, through a knowledge exchange project, by using NPT to inform the planning and development of identified change projects over the course of the 2023/2024 academic year.

We explored how the schools used NPT as a starting point for changing their approaches to organizational change through the use of focus groups and mapping processes during the change projects to see how their perceptions and practice of change management shifted as a result of using a new change theory.

The results gained through this study show that in both schools, leaders and teachers began to understand the process of organizational change differently, developing approaches to change which were more dialogic and iterative. There is also early evidence that these new perspectives will have longer term implications for leader practice in relation to driving and supporting change

On reflection, this project suggests that Normalization Process Theory offers a useful framework for understanding the complexity of change processes in organisations, including the role of leaders. As such, it shows potential to be a planning framework for those instigating and working through change projects.

Workshop / Roundtable

How can middle leadership development enable organisational improvement and development during turbulent times?

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Renaissance Suite) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 294

Dr. Lizana Oberholzer (University of Wolverhampton)

Cameron and Green (2020) argue that individual change, leads to group and organisational change. At a time where middle leadership development is often highlighted as underdeveloped - despite the drive to provide a career pathways providing a golden thread through the National Professional Qualifications in School Leadership (DfE, 2020), this interpretivist case study, aimed to explore how middle leadership, can be driven by bespoke interventions such as non-linear coaching, to enable school leaders to drive their own journeys. The study aimed to unpack how bespoke coaching support can enable middle leaders to make sense of their complex work environments (Weick, 1995), and to find suitable solutions with their teams to drive school improvement. The study was conducted within an English context, focusing on middle leaders within Multi Academy Trusts who engaged with bespoke external coaching to enable them to refine their practices, and to drive their teams more strategically. The study was conducted by using semi-structured interviews, to unpack the experiences of middle leaders and their teams, to gain a detailed understanding of the impact of the bespoke non-linear coaching on both the middle leader's development as well as their teams' growth, as well as the impact on learners. Participants engaged in the study on a voluntary basis, and all the necessary ethical requirements were met as outlined in the BERA (2024) guidance. Data was thematically analysed through the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6 phase framework. The study revealed that coaching can provide a safe learning space for middle leaders to explore strategic leadership strategies, and opportunities to refine their skills to lead their teams more effectively. In addition, it provided an opportunity for middle leaders, to find safe spaces to explore key challenges with the support of a critical friend, which provided a value added wellbeing support benefit, especially during turbulent times.

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Developing Community Amongst Faculty Who Are Preparing the Next Generation of Transformative School Leaders

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Noblesse) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 80

Dr. Deirdra Preis (Sacred Heart University)

Preparing transformative school leaders, or leaders who place equitable educational access for every student at the center of their work, can be challenging on a variety of levels. This presentation will facilitate dialogue amongst leadership preparation faculty and administrators around preparing transformative school leaders, offering a practical opportunity to share and learn from each other as we discuss common pedagogical quandaries, questions, and successes. After a brief presentation in which some research around preparing transformative leaders will be shared and a common working vocabulary established for us all, we will pivot to roundtable group discussions in which we will share both programmatic and instructional challenges and successes for 1) encouraging critical reflexivity, 2) improving the relevance of curricular content, 3) creating engaging instruction and practical application. As leadership preparation approaches will likely look different in the various countries of our participants, we will also share similarities and differences around how leadership preparation occurs different regions. This session will increase our knowledge but also offer an opportunity to develop solidarity and validation for our work at a time of increasing political challenge to democratic ideals and inclusive educational spaces. We will also answer the question “what now” in terms of future meeting opportunities.

Tools for critical leadership development: a practical workshop introducing art-based methodologies and methods of collage.

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Coleridge) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 249

Dr. Jo Townshend (Independent Researcher)

As leaders navigate uncertain times of anthropocentric turbulence, crisis fatigue and global challenges, a turn to creative methodologies may be helpful. Where the contribution of arts-based research and collage methodologies within domains of education are already in motion (Eisner, 2008; Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015; Capous-Desyllas & Morgaine, 2018), it is less so for critical leadership development. This participatory workshop tends to speculations that leaders and aspiring leaders of English education need to educate for unimaginable futures and that new tools to interrogate established education concepts and develop the self-reflexive questioning needed to best serve our rising, plural generations are required. Furthermore, in seeking to address the gap in critical perspectives for leadership development (Woods et al, 2020), the development of creative approaches may assist in the production of alternative and equitable leadership becomings.

Moving beyond theory, this practical session introduces arts-based research and performs the dynamic act of cutting through the power of language (Barad, 2003) to re-make modes of leadership development as colourful visual provocations. Firstly, processes of erasure and immaterialism will be drawn from the arts practice of Rauschenberg, Martin and Parker and enacted as positive modes to disturb oppressive policy enactments. Secondly, the critical collage modalities of Warhol, Kruger and Landgraf using methods of cutting and slicing to dismantle exclusionary barriers of managerialism will be demonstrated as acts of resistance. Working individually, participants, with or without experience in the creative arts, are invited to draw upon their praxical knowledge, engage with deconstructing and reconstructing techniques using arts materials and a data set of education policy, community images, statements and lexical matter in the production of new materialist provocations (Bennett, 2010; Coole & Frost, 2010) for critical leadership development. The emergent visual provocations will be curated in an exhibition as a dynamic space for group reflection on the value of collage as a critical methodology for the education field.

Illiberal Democracy is circulating in the world: Towards a new ethics of Educational Leadership in increasingly illiberal state regimes

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Keats) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 174

Dr. Bill Black (University of South Florida), Dr. Ira Bogotch (Florida Atlantic University)

In 2023, the authors were invited to contribute to a commentary piece to the *Journal Educational Administration and History*. Titled "Illiberal democracy has now come to Florida: what can academics do?", the article was published before the election of Donald Trump. The United States election results represent a further consolidation of illiberal and authoritarian trends evidenced in democracies around the world. This workshop seeks to build off that work and invite BELMAS attendees to work with us to extend and further internationalize the work of envisioning new ethics of educational leadership in these times. A central question that guides this session is in what ways might Academics, working with school systems frame and act upon their professional responsibility in these increasingly illiberal times?

In this workshop session we will briefly describe the context of Florida and the US and then unpack the theoretical engagements that informed the original piece. In interweaving three concepts prominent in disability studies (Davis, 2017; Feder Katay, 2017; Meissner, 2017): interdependency, covenants, and a series of good tries. Eva Feder Kittay (2017) argues that an adequate theory of justice must account for interdependency that structures all of our lives. There is a mutual and inevitable dependency on others-that pushes us to highlight responsibilities and engagements. In recognizing interdependence, we don't push back reactively, but rather enact a series of good tries-over and over again because of our covenant to the profession and community in which we work.

We seek to generate, through the workshop session, the type of collaboration and connection that reveal our collected interdependence across academic and K-12 educational contexts. We want to ask audience members to engage in questions around what constitutes our interdependence (Kittay) and intersubjectivity in leadership (Biesta) in which we refuse and negate both the subject and object as distinct categories. The workshop might ask the following:

In what ways may we revisit the notions of warrants and claims and the ethical dimensions of a contemporary empiricism?

What can counter self-interest and self-protection evident in the turn toward illiberal and more authoritarian regimes across the globe?

How do we articulate common good and public good traditions in such circumstances?

How might Educational Leadership-for its future health and relevance continue to tie itself to K-12 and local educational communities as a means of combating cynicism and despair?

At the end of the session, we would like to ask audience members to consider and perhaps plan to contribute to what the next iteration of the paper looks like.

How successful school leaders navigate challenges in turbulent times and foster meaningful change

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Shelley) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 262

Dr. William Sterrett (Baylor University), Dr. Jayson Richardson (William & Mary)

Our research team conducted a study of 30 award-winning principals in the United States. These school leaders had each received the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) state principal of the year award. Awardees are selected from each state for providing high-quality learning opportunities for their students. Our study examined principals in the 2020-2023 cohorts to ascertain a “post-pandemic” perspective in an era of rapid change and even turbulence.

The interviews included ten anchor questions that focused on the principal’s professional background and leadership trajectory, the impact of the award on their career trajectory, leadership approaches, challenges faced, challenges anticipated in the future, preparation programs, and successful strategies the principals utilized to foster student success.

This roundtable discussion will take an in-depth look at what our data say regarding current challenges, as well as future anticipated challenges. The most significant challenges facing today’s school leaders are suffocating job pressures, teacher shortages, mental health challenges facing the school community, equity and access issues, and dwindling resources at the school level. This presentation will include voices from the principal participants and further analysis.

Future challenges anticipated by school leaders include preparing students for a future world, staying relevant in the changing world, continued teacher shortages, political division and strife, and navigating technology innovations. Yet our discussion will also include a hopeful and pragmatic element, as we sought to understand what principals “go to” strategies include. From tips on managing time to being an active listener, we will share helpful insights that apply to various settings around the world. We will synthesize current research and point to future research opportunities as well.

Finally, we will point a way forward based on our findings. There will be implications for how practitioners can cultivate collaborative leadership within their schools, by providing relevant professional development and fostering teacher leadership. There are implications for how current principals can be a part of a professional learning network to share in-the-moment challenges and innovations. And there is also perspective for leadership preparation programs seeking to equip the next generation of successful school leaders, even amid turbulent times.

“We Are From Opposite Sides, But We Are In The Same Situation”: Cogenerative Spaces* As a Tool For School Improvement

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Tennyson) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 257

Ms. Stephanie Hill (University of Cambridge)

There is little doubt that school improvement is a complex endeavour. School organisations are dynamic systems where individuals interact in different ways on any given day, and where both adults and children are constantly changing and growing within their own unique contexts. In addition, school improvement approaches intersect with education systems, family systems and societal expectations and inequalities, and are defined by regulatory parameters and legislative processes. Often, this has led to professional learning and school development programs that are implemented across school settings and look to external facilitators and companies for expertise and to meet outcomes. Whilst there is value in these programs, growing concerns about inequalities, behaviour and respect in schools, speaks to a need to consider the transformational potential of those who have the most experience of the nested systems within each school setting: our students and teachers.

This workshop invites participants to consider how educational leaders can reimagine school improvement approaches by empowering the collaborative voice and collective agency of teachers and students. It draws upon recent research conducted with students and teachers in secondary school settings in the UK, Sweden and the UAE. Using the pedagogical tool, *cogenerative spaces**, students and teachers co-generated insights into the mechanisms that drive learning in their own school organisation. Employing a mixed methods approach using process tracing and Sociocultural Discourse Analysis, the study found that there is promise in mobilising the insights that come from teachers and students engaging in dialogue together.

Drawing upon their experiences and expertise, participants will engage in critical discussion about the pedagogical tool developed in the study, in particular its potential in enabling a physical and metaphorical space where students can discuss their lived experiences of learning with teachers, as co-learners. Alongside this, using process diagrams derived from the study findings as provocations, participants will engage in co-generative dialogue as they discuss the mechanisms that drive learning across a range of education contexts and co-design school improvement approaches that empower the collective knowledge of teachers and students.

**Cogenerative spaces: a pedagogical tool that combines collage-making and cogenerative dialogue to enable structured/guided discussions where individuals act as co-learners and enquirers, building on each other's contributions so that new knowledge is generated and/or previous meanings and processes are challenged and changed. Co-ownership and co-creation support an aim to move beyond the power differentials that can restrict the sharing of perceptions and meaning in traditional education contexts.*

Artificial Intelligence and Research: Terrifying or Terrific?

Saturday, 5th July - 14:05: Workshop / Roundtable (Wordsworth) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 63

Prof. Pamela Angelle (The University of Tennessee), Dr. Jennifer Morrow (The University of Tennessee)

The inevitability of artificial intelligence (AI) as part of teaching and learning is certain. While university professors may express caution, apprehension, curiosity, interest, or disdain for the use of artificial intelligence, AI is here to stay. Current literature provides numerous systematic reviews of AI (Ouyang & Jiao, 2021; Thomas et al., 2023), historical overviews (Chen et al., 2022), and AI research in K12 education disciplines (Antonenko & Abramowitz, 2023; Marino et al., 2023; Yetisensoy & Rapoport, 2023).

However, while literature has explicated the successes and challenges of AI in teaching, few have focused on higher education andragogy (Ullrich et al., 2022) and fewer still have focused on the how of using AI in the university classroom specifically in teaching research methods and in supporting dissertation research. As AI has entered mainstream education and has engendered some manner of turbulence, professors of education would be well advised to approach AI as a tool for reform and development.

Addressing the BELMAS strand of Methodological Approaches to Leadership Research, the purpose of this workshop is to showcase how faculty can utilize AI in their research methods courses, examine the benefits of AI in higher education graduate teaching, present cautions in the potential uses of AI, and lastly to interact with AI, along with the workshop audience.

Audience members are encouraged to bring a digital device with access to an AI program, such as ChatGPT. The workshop will begin with an introduction to artificial intelligence in education, an overview of cautionary practices, and suggestions for crafting effective search prompts. This will be followed by an interactive session on how AI can be used as an adaptable tutoring tool for graduate students, particularly in the area of educational research and dissertation writing. An emphasis will be placed on how one can use AI in supporting student writing and thinking, rather than supplanting student work. The session will conclude with audience questions, feedback, and suggestions. Additional resources, sample classroom activities, and workshop materials will be available to the audience in a shared google folder.

Parallel Session 4

Que(e)rying leadership on a LGBTQ+ Leadership Development Programme for UK Higher Education (HE) staff

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 17

Dr. Alex Baird (University of Bedfordshire)

This research breaks the limits of previous leadership literature where LGBTQ+ leadership has often been overlooked. It also enriches scarce LGBTQ+ leadership research by exploring and challenging former assumptions and by moving beyond a visibility of LGBTQ+ leaders to research that challenges current paradigms of leadership itself. My research set about que(e)rying educational leadership, leadership models and leadership development within UK Higher Education (HE) by accessing a rare LGBTQ+ leadership development programme delivered in one university. The (post-)qualitative research design for this research, owing to my positionality, role on the programme and mode of analysis, is unusual in leadership research.

Reflecting upon one's lived experiences is essential for leadership if it is to prioritise purposes and values. However, the connections between LGBTQ+ lives and leadership is not always made by LGBTQ+ individuals nor is LGBTQ+ leaders' capital always recognised by others. Despite LGBTQ+ leaders navigating a rather distinct leadership path, often without LGBTQ+ mentorship, there is currently no LGBTQ+ leadership development programme offered by organisations that provide training in aspects of Higher Education (HE) leadership. This highlights the significance of a leadership development programme that ran for LGBTQ+ academic and professional staff in one post-1992 university from Sept 2022 to May 2023. The programme consisted of three formalised classroom days and individual mentorship.

Recognising the potential to query leadership in UK HE, I accessed the programme as an 'insider' of the LGBTQ+ population, an 'outsider' of the host university, and a 'participating observer'. I aimed to recruit all those involved in the programme (23 associates). Seventeen attendees gave consent for their oral contributions to be included in field notes on programme days. The sixteen attendees interviewed (eight academic and eight professional staff) held differing levels of seniority, roles and contracts and thus had a varying amount of experience in leadership roles across various areas within and beyond the institution. All participants were LGBTQ+; the group offered a variety of genders and ages from (20s to 50+); the majority (13) were white; Asian and European nationalities and cultural heritage beyond the UK were also included (four).

I came to understand my research as (post-)qualitative, recognising the blurred edges of the programme and institution, the entanglement of my investment in the programme, my growing relationships with participants and their evolving connections to one another. Reflexive thematic analysis allowed me to engage with queer theory and identify three interwoven themes: the distinction and potential of LGBTQ+ leadership; the portrayal, empowerment and collaboration of trailblazers; the possibility, precarity and rupture of queer space.

By reframing leadership, this research helps to make LGBTQ+ leaders' leadership intelligible and makes leadership more accessible and pertinent to LGBTQ+ staff. Significantly, it offers an alternative form of leadership, one that is collaborative, compassionate and discerning, and appears to be relevant to the challenging landscape of UK HE. This research may also guide future leadership development programmes in order to attract, retain and progress LGBTQ+ talent.

Shaping the Future: Advancing Women’s Success Across Education, Work, and Beyond

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 83

Dr. Anfal Alwahaibi (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University)

This study highlights the professional trajectories of women in leadership roles within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. While governmental institutions have seen significant growth in women’s career advancement, access to leadership positions remains limited. Many policies and initiatives that foster this growth have either overlooked critical issues or inadvertently marginalized specific groups within society. The study explores the various obstacles that hinder equitable access, ranging from socioeconomic disparities to systemic biases in multiple sectors. The study provides insights into the intersectionality of elements such as equity, empowerment, and inclusion within governmental institutions. Examining these issues through a sociological perspective offers significant insights into the structural and institutional factors influencing women’s employment systems in GCC countries. Several studies have demonstrated that social norms and belief systems limit women’s career options and the available economic, educational, and employment opportunities. These limitations are exacerbated by societal expectations that prescribe specific gender roles. Women’s careers are often shaped by cultural realities attributed to the generation of particular gender scripts that women reference when they enact their careers. Many of these cases occur in rural areas where women are frequently seen as the primary homemakers (Al-Wahaibi, 2023).

The study offers a comprehensive analysis of various factors that promote and hinder young female leaders’ progress within the Middle East’s government organizations. It emphasizes how crucial it is to provide targeted support to this demographic, particularly considering the region’s swiftly changing social, political, and economic landscapes. In an era of social change, female leadership roles and expectations are also evolving, necessitating a focused approach that allows young female leaders to become empowered and uplifted. To achieve its aims, the research is constructed around particular questions and objectives that are articulated through a qualitative interpretive framework. This method makes a more nuanced vision of the struggles and experiences of these women in leadership positions possible. A thorough literature review establishes a solid theoretical foundation and specific customized interview questions that are carefully crafted to elicit rich, detailed participants’ responses. These interview questions are anticipated to capture the participants’ experiences’ complexities and identify gaps and opportunities for further exploration. In addition, the research highlights the essential role of collaborative initiatives among stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and educators, in tackling systemic inequities and establishing pathways for all individuals to achieve their career goals and realize their potential. We anticipate that this study will catalyze policymakers to enhance gender equality by gathering insights that can inform policy recommendations by adopting more assertive strategies for improving their representation and effectiveness in government roles within institutions. It is essential to recognize gender equality as both a vital talent and a moral obligation. Furthermore, it urges us to become increasingly aware of our daily decisions that influence gender equality in the region.

Leading for Inclusive Academic Excellence in Polarized Times: A Rural College Case Study on What Works

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 119

*Dr. George Panayiotou (University of Colorado Denver), Dr. Julia Mahfouz (University of Colorado Denver),
Ms. Amanda Christopher (University of Colorado, Denver), Mr. Samuel Soliman (University of Colorado, Denver)*

Inclusive Academic Excellence (IAE) is a focal point in educational leadership research, particularly amid contentious public discussions, where divergent opinions on progressive issues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) persist (Hernández-Sac et al., 2023; Mbua, 2023). Despite the benefits of IAE within higher education, implementing these principles effectively and getting buy-in from stakeholders continues to pose challenges for leadership (Williams et al., 2005). These challenges are pronounced in rural areas of the United States, where backlash against progressive notions intensifies, especially amid polarized political climates that tend to exacerbate these divides. This study centers on a community college in rural Colorado and the concerted efforts of its president to implement and advance IAE initiatives amid these complex dynamics.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine how rural community colleges promote IAE amid polarized environments through the perceptions of its leadership, focusing on what works under these challenges. Two research questions will guide this qualitative study.

1. How does the president's leadership contribute to advancing the college's goal of becoming an inclusive and academically excellent institution?
2. What are the perceptions of faculty and staff regarding the effectiveness of the president's leadership in planning and implementing strategies for IAE?

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

This study is conceptually grounded on Transformational Leadership (TL) (Bass & Avolio, 1993). TL effectively examines how leaders inspire and enact change. It is based on the idea that leaders embody idealized influence attributes, idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Following Yin (2008) a qualitative case study methodology examines the leadership efforts towards IAE. As part of a bigger project, the case study used 35 interviews with faculty and staff, to explore perceptions on the president's TL leadership for IAE (Stake, 2010). Using the Dedoose software, we categorized, coded and analyzed the data inductively following processes associated with constructivism (Charmaz, 2014).

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary analysis revealed TL attributes, highlighting themes of transparency, collaboration, and social awareness. Faculty described the president as fostering inclusivity and gaining community trust through transparency, open communication, and direct problem-solving. Despite resource concerns for sustaining IAE, faculty recognized the president's responsiveness and alignment of feedback with institutional goals. His TL, exemplified by idealized influence and inspirational motivation, actively encouraging cross-department collaboration and innovation, seen in coordinated efforts in admissions and advising. He also manages polarized environments by promoting restorative student conduct that prioritizes growth and retention, with explicit commitment to IAE.

Significance of the Study

This study fills a critical gap in the educational leadership literature by focusing on leadership for IAE in rural community colleges, particularly in the context of increasing backlash against progressive initiatives. The study aims to provide insights into the TL behaviors that promote IAE, offering an evidence-based framework for rural

educational institutions across the rural United States and beyond facing similar challenges within polarized environments. The findings are relevant to the conference themes of leadership for equity, diversity, and social justice, as well as leadership development.

Exploring the Career trajectory of Assistant Principals in Schools in Victoria, Australia

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 43

Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne), Prof. David Gurr (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Pauline Thompson (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Helen Goode (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Lawrie Drysdale (The University of Melbourne)

Assistant principals (APs) are essential members of school senior leadership teams, yet research on their roles and career trajectories remains scarce (Soho et al., 2012; Thompson, 2019). Cranston et al. (2004) referred to APs as forgotten leaders. Understanding the career progression and professional development needs of APs is vital for sustaining the educational leadership pipeline, which spans early career stages, middle leadership, assistant principalship, and ultimately principalship. This study gains particular relevance amid global teacher shortages and declining interest in leadership roles, which hinder the fulfilment of leadership positions. It is also the first study of its kind conducted in Australia.

This research investigated the career pathways of 20 APs in Victoria, Australia, and the experiences that influenced their journeys. A dual theoretical framework was applied: life history and ecological systems theory. The life history approach captures reflections on significant career moments and influences (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1996), while ecological systems theory places these experiences within a broader societal context (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Two central research questions guided the study: (1) What key influences (people, experiences, places, or events) shaped the path to becoming an assistant principal? (2) How do APs envision their future careers? Data were gathered through semi-structured online interviews with 20 APs from diverse school systems across Victoria. The term “assistant principal” denotes a leadership role below principalship, sometimes referred to as vice-principal or deputy principal. Interview data were transcribed and thematically analysed to uncover key patterns.

Preliminary findings reveal that many APs did not follow a strategic career plan; rather, their career advancements often occurred organically, with leadership opportunities arising unexpectedly. This trend was observed among both men and women; however, women's career paths were frequently more non-linear, aligning with existing research highlighting the interruptions women face in their professional journeys. APs often gained experience across different educational settings, emphasizing the value of varied leadership contexts. The life history approach illuminated the significant impact of mentors and senior leaders, who fostered confidence and nurtured leadership potential by offering professional development, further education, and leadership roles. Despite their leadership roles, only a few APs expressed aspirations for principalship. Factors contributing to this reluctance included the perceived complexity and intensification of principal responsibilities, challenges related to work-life balance, and a preference for maintaining close professional connections with teachers and students.

An important highlight is the inequitable nature of leadership opportunities. Many participants mentioned that being “tapped on the shoulder” was a common way to become an AP, highlighting a need for more inclusive and equitable leadership development structures. Organisational practices should aim to provide accessible leadership opportunities for all, rather than relying on subjective selection by senior leaders. This study underscores the necessity of creating fair and structured pathways for leadership advancement within schools.

Parallel Session 4

Balancing the Scales: Understanding Principal Turnover and Retention Challenges in Irish Primary Schools

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 133

Dr. Brian Cahill (Hibernia College)

This paper offers a unique exploration of the turnover and retention of primary school principals in Ireland. The issues of principal burnout and attrition have garnered significant attention, particularly in light of recent policy reforms and curriculum developments. These changes have led to increased workloads, stressful conditions, and, consequently, a negative impact on principal turnover. By delving into the Irish context, this research adds to the body of literature on educational leadership, addressing a notable gap by including the perspectives of former school leaders.

Six in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with former Irish primary school leaders. The findings were then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. This allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex factors influencing principals’ decisions to step down to emerge.

The research identifies several key factors that negatively impact the retention and turnover of Irish primary school leaders. Workload emerges as a primary concern, with principals often struggling to manage the demands of their roles. The balance between professional responsibilities and personal life is another significant issue, as the intense workload negatively impacts on personal time, leading to stress and burnout. Health concerns, both physical and mental, are also highlighted as critical factors influencing principals’ decisions to leave their positions. Additionally, the role of the teaching principal—where principals are expected to fulfil teaching duties alongside their leadership responsibilities—presents unique challenges that exacerbate stress and contribute to turnover.

These findings offer actionable insights that can inform educational leadership within the primary education sector in Ireland and beyond. The research underscores the pressing need for stakeholders to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school principals, advocating for a comprehensive review of the viability of the teaching principal role. It emphasises the necessity for clearer delineation of duties to alleviate the excessive workload and improve work-life balance, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

Importantly, this study calls for the introduction of a formal step-down procedure for all primary school principals. By providing a structured pathway for principals to transition out of their roles, this procedure could mitigate the negative impacts of abrupt departures and ensure smoother transitions for schools and students alike.

The paper also identifies under-researched areas that warrant further investigation. These include the specific workloads in schools with special classes, the unique challenges of leadership in start-up schools, and the experiences of loneliness and isolation among Irish primary school principals. Addressing these areas could provide deeper insights into the diverse challenges faced by school leaders and inform targeted interventions to support them.

In conclusion, this cutting-edge research contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on principal well-being, leadership sustainability, and turnover. It challenges existing paradigms and offers fresh perspectives, urging policymakers and educational stakeholders to take proactive steps in addressing the systemic issues affecting primary school principals. Through its detailed analysis and actionable recommendations, this paper aims to enhance the support structures for school leaders, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and effective educational leadership landscape in Ireland.

How contemporary school principals manage increasingly politicized school communities

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 193

Dr. Cameron Hauseman (University of Manitoba), Mr. Brayden Epp (University of Manitoba)

Research objectives:

The public has never been more engaged in the political processes surrounding public education. On the surface, citizens becoming increasingly engaged in these processes is a good thing, especially considering how school board elections have long been criticized for fueling apathy and low voter turnout. However, the ways in which some individuals are expressing their political views about public schooling, such as aiming to limit access to books that promote 2LGTBQ+ rights, run counter to the goals and purposes of public education systems. While the work of K-12 school principals has always been political in nature, their work and workload are increasingly being impacted by the shifting political climate surrounding public education. This research aims to document how the political climate influences:

1. the types of tasks and activities principals engage in as part of their daily work?
2. how they complete those tasks?
3. the nature of their work and workload in any other ways?

Proposed Methodology

This study is framed by the concept of work. Work, as defined by Fineman (2012), is a remunerated, regulated task(s) that is distinctly separate from non-work. Work is a multi-faceted concept that includes structural (i.e., hours, location, working conditions, time on task, policy/directives), socio-emotional (i.e., stress, relationship building, collaboration) and psychological aspects (i.e., creativity, fulfilment, motivation, growth opportunities). This definition is particularly suited to the purposes of this study as it includes virtual work and other work-related tasks completed away from a defined work site.

Data is derived from interviews with 15 elementary school principals in Manitoba, Canada. The interviews were between 35 minutes and just over an hour in length. Interview questions asked principals to describe the nature of their work and workload, how they spend their time on a daily basis, as well as inquire about challenges and opportunities associated with their work. The interview sample is diverse and representative of the broad range of different contexts in which Manitoba's school principals' work.

Expected outcomes:

Analysis is still in the early stages, but some meaningful themes have emerged from the dataset. Political tensions evident in broader society are spilling over into school communities, increasingly making schools the next battle ground in contemporary culture wars. Principals report having to devote time and energy to manage conflict in the school that occurs due to political divisions among, students, staff, and parents in the school communities. Navigating politically motivated conflicts at the school diverts time and attention away from instructional leadership and prevents principals from maximizing their impact on students' academic and nonacademic outcomes. Most principals in this study are not prepared to manage the deep-seated political tensions evident in their school communities. These tensions arise due to different notions about the purposes of public education, such as parent groups expressing concern over the creation and use of gender-neutral washrooms in schools, and attempting to limit instruction about race and reconciliation, evolution and 2LGTBQ+ issues.

The inter-professional relationship between principals and teachers in Sweden – how do principals navigate grading and assessment?

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 230

Dr. Elin Stark (Centre for Principal Development, Department of Political Science, Umeå University), Dr. Magnus Larsson (Centre for Principal Development, Department of Political Science, Umeå University)

Studies have indicated that school leaders struggle in their efforts to support teachers in processes involving grading and assessment. This study seeks to investigate this challenge in the Swedish context, where fair and equitable grading is high on the political agenda with potential reforms of the grading system underway. Current political tendencies imply a move towards increasing standardization, for instance in terms of the introduction of centralized assessment of standardized tests, signifying a potential decline of the discretion of individual teachers.

In Sweden, the principal is accountable for ensuring fair and equitable grading but when it comes to the act of grading, the discretion and mandate lies with the teacher. This potential conflict between teacher discretion and principal accountability constitutes a challenge for principals in their leadership of grading and assessment practices.

We take a critical approach to investigate principals’ understanding of their professional role with regards to grading and assessment. We do this by invoking the literature on sociology of profession, particularly the distinction between occupational and organisational professionalism. Occupational professionalism is grounded in the idea that autonomy and discretionary judgement is the fundamental approach to professional practice whereas organizational professionalism highlights managerialism, control, accountability regimes and standardization. We argue that principals have one foot in the teaching profession (occupational professionalism) and one foot in the managerial profession (organisational professionalism).

Given this, the aim of this paper is to investigate principals’ leadership practices and how they understand their role in grading and assessment.

- How do principals in Sweden understand their role in grading and assessment?
- How are aspects of occupational professionalism and organizational professionalism manifested in these leadership practices?

To investigate these research questions, two group interviews with principals were conducted about their perceptions on grading and assessment. Preliminary results show that leadership practices expressed by the principals include aspects of both organisational and occupational professionalism. However, the principals tend to emphasize teacher autonomy and are reluctant to get directly involved and challenge teachers’ grading and assessment practices, safe-guarding the relationship to the teacher profession.

Compromised Choices in Primary School Leadership: Opportunities for and Challenges of Flexible Working.

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 202

Mrs. Victoria Johnson (University of Staffordshire)

This research addresses the critical issues of teacher retention and headteacher recruitment in England, focusing particularly on the gender imbalance in educational leadership. While women numerically dominate the teaching workforce, their representation in headteacher positions remains disproportionately low, with many experienced female teachers leaving the profession between ages 30 and 39 (Jones, 2017). This trend occurs despite broader social shifts in women's participation in the workforce during the last 50 years, with more women in full-time paid employment, including those with children (Flores et al., 2021). However, significant gender disparities persist, including a significant pay gap and underrepresentation in high-status roles (Flores et al., 2021).

The Department for Education (DfE) produced the *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy* in 2019 in response to widespread concerns about teacher shortages. Flexible working, defined as an employee's control over when and where they work (Chung and Van Der Lipp, 2018), is one proposed solution. This includes part-time work, job-sharing, staggered hours, and remote working. Flexible working is not just relevant to working mothers but increasingly appeals to a broader range of employees who view it as a desirable norm in the workplace (DfE, 2019; Chung and Van Der Lipp, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the demand for flexible working and reinforced the importance of work-life balance (Chung et al., 2021). This research investigates the barriers and enablers to flexible working in primary school leadership roles.

The research draws on feminist and post-structuralist theoretical frameworks, particularly Foucault's analysis of social norms and power structures. Feminism and Foucault share a common concern with the perpetuation of societal norms (Ells, 2003), the research critiques how gender inequalities in educational leadership are obscured by the illusion of 'free choice'. While flexible working is seen as an option, structural tensions within schools, such as heavy workloads and performance pressures, often complicate its implementation (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). In addition, women in leadership roles frequently experience conflicts between their professional and personal responsibilities, with work-life balance seen as a personal issue rather than an organisational concern (Gascoigne and Kelliher, 2018). Furthermore, flexible working is often stigmatised, with part-time workers perceived as less committed to their careers and the organisation (Dick, 2015).

A gap in the literature exists regarding flexible working in school leadership roles. While many school leaders are open to flexible working for teachers, they are less inclined to approve requests from those in leadership roles (Cooper-Gibson, 2020). The research is a case study of leaders working flexibly in English primary schools involving 10 qualitative interviews. The voices of senior leaders who have left the profession, those that remain and those that are in decision-making positions are included. The research provides insights into how school leaders navigate 'compromised choices' due to resource and systemic constraints, while balancing organisation and personal needs. Initial emerging themes include financialisation, depoliticalisation, teacher identity and professional envy. The research contributes to a better understanding of how flexible working can be applied within school leadership to address the gender imbalance in leadership roles.

Parallel Session 4

Teachers' perception of educational research and knowledge generation; a phenomenographical study

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 21

Mrs. Claire Harley (University of Nottingham)

How do teachers conceptualise educational research and their use of it in their practice? The idea of research engagement is not new and yet there is a gap in our understanding of the concept; what teachers think. My EdD thesis focuses on finding a definition of what educational research means to teachers in English secondary schools in 2024.

Through a phenomenographical methodology, I am seeking to better understand the impact of educational research on teachers' sense of self-efficacy and professionalism. The purpose of my thesis is to better understand the extent to which teachers see themselves as knowledge generators in education and how teachers feel about their current relationship with academic research.

My presentation fits within the conference theme of teacher leadership, but additionally, one of the wider themes for this year's conference is turbulence. My thesis will challenge the extent to which educational research is useful, relevant and essential to the lives of teachers. Whilst the term turbulence has strong connotations, I do believe that there is an urgent and real need to explore the extent to which teachers see themselves as knowledge generators and teacher leaders in education. We also need to be open to critiquing to what extent academic work is being effectively focused on the needs of and disseminated to teachers. Whilst there are many academics striving to engage teachers with research, there is also a level of distrust within the teaching profession.

My presentation will outline the reasons I have undertaken this study as both an EdD student and teacher/school leader before I explore the concepts of professionalism and self-efficacy in the literature. I shall then outline the findings of my data analysis so far; identifying how teachers view the current situation, decoding what teachers want educational research to look like and finally offer recommendations for how BELMAS members can bridge the gap between research and practice within the context of neoliberalism, the use of educational research is as much about power structures as they are about actual evidence. Teachers' perceptions of educational research is heavily linked to their perceptions of their senior leadership team. Additionally, teachers can use educational research as a tool with which they feel they can challenge authority. The findings of my study so far highlight the ineffectiveness of current professional development programmes and the work that needs to be done to individualise and contextualise teachers' experiences. By understanding the current situation, we can then consider how we can work together to bridge the gap between research evidence and everyday practice.

Leading Professional Learning Communities in China: The Role of Teaching Research Group Heads in Shanghai

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 161

Prof. LIJIA WANG (East China Normal University), Prof. Tony Bush (University of Nottingham), Prof. Manhong Lai (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

The concept of the professional learning community (PLC) has gained popularity in recent years due to its potential to enable teachers to take collective responsibility for student teaching and learning (Bush, 2019; Zheng Xin & Ye Juyan). In establishing effective PLCs, distributed leadership, particularly embodied in the form of teacher leadership, has been shown to significantly influence the impact of leadership on learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; DeMatthews, 2014; Harris, 2003). Teacher leaders, being well-versed in the complexities of teaching, can create a non-hierarchical environment within PLCs. By modeling effective classroom strategies, they directly share best practices with their colleagues, fostering professional growth. They can also promote change from within (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). As Harris (2003) concluded, teacher leadership is essential for building PLCs in schools. Therefore, it is timely to examine the roles of teacher leaders and their leadership practices within PLCs.

In China, the use of school-based learning communities, known as Teaching Research Groups (TRGs, *ji-yanzu*), to enhance teachers' professional competency and instructional skills, has a long-standing tradition (Zhang and Wong, 2018; Paine and Ma, 1993). As a form of PLC, TRGs share several characteristics with Western PLCs (Zhang & Pang, 2016). It also exhibits cultural characteristics, such as a top-down approach, contrived collaboration (Wang, 2015; Hairon, 2017). Zhang, Wong and Wang (2022) found that TRG heads greatly influence how PLCs function.

Given the unique characteristics of Chinese TRGs, and the need for further research on the role of teacher leaders in PLCs, this study examines how TRG heads interpret their roles within PLCs and how they lead within these communities.

A case method was used to examine the roles and leadership of TRG heads in China. Two primary schools in Shanghai were purposively selected for their exemplary TRG performance. In each school, three TRGs were chosen based on their reputations. The group head and two additional members in each group were recommended by the administration. A total of six TRG heads and twelve teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview questions focused on participants' views on the operation of TRGs and the leading practice of TRG heads. An inductive approach was employed for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Preliminary findings reveal that TRG heads, as formal teacher leaders, are expert teachers who can effectively negotiate among colleagues. The heads assume the role of learning community builders, who are responsible for constructing the PLC's vision and mission. They also serve as translators and directors, converting district requirements into specific subject teaching guidelines and ensuring these requirements are followed. Additionally, they act as mentors, leading new teachers through “both words and actions” (*yanchuan shenjiao*). Furthermore, they serve as supporters and encouragers, motivating teachers to “strive for excellence” and providing both emotional and intellectual support. Based on these findings, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of teacher leadership within PLCs.

Constructing and validating a structural model of teacher leadership in primary and secondary schools in China

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 64

Ms. Shan Xue (University of Guizhou)

Teacher leadership has been recognized as an important prerequisite for teachers to achieve instructional, professional and cooperative development. Empirical evidence around the world also demonstrates that teacher leadership is an influential factor in improving the overall level of the teaching force and enhancing the efficiency of school operation. While, currently, none researches explored how teacher leadership could be measured and investigated under Chinese context through quantitative tools. Our research constructs the structure of teacher leadership in Chinese schools. From the perspective of leadership as a “process” proposed by both domestic and international scholars, this study compiles a scale of teacher leadership, which includes instructional leadership in classroom teaching, peer influence in school communities, and change agency for school development. A total of 6,038 teachers from six cities across mainland China were surveyed using structural equation modelling, and the data were analyzed with SPSS 24.0 and AMOS 24.0 software.

The study reveals the following findings: (1) From the perspective of “leadership as a process,” the three - dimension model proves to be stable, and the correlations among different dimensions are strong. (2) The overall level of teacher leadership in China is relatively limited, especially when compared with other educational systems worldwide. (3) The level of leadership decreases as the scope of influence expands. Teachers exhibit the highest level of leadership in classroom teaching, followed by peer influence, with the change agency being the lowest. Furthermore, the study examines how different levels of factors may affect teachers’ leadership. The results indicate that both personal and organizational factors play a role, as: (1) Male teachers display higher levels of teacher leadership than their female counterparts; (2) The awareness of leadership increases with their working experience grows; (3) The level of leadership is also related to school performance, as teachers from high - performing schools demonstrate higher leadership abilities than those from normal - to under - performing schools. In addition, the results of path analysis using the SEM model show that these three dimensions are inter - related both within and between each other, all having a positive impact on one another. Strategies for enhancing the level of teacher leadership in China include reconfiguring school leadership structures, developing professional learning communities, and constructing a transformative school culture, which are three key strategies for teacher leadership development in China.

Due to cultural and administrative reasons, research on teacher leadership in China still scarce. Domestic research on teacher leadership mainly focuses at theoretical level, such as conceptual analysis, definitions, manifestations and classifications. However, the amount of quantitative and empirical research is very limited. In particular, no research has provided an empirical measurement of how to evaluate the degrees of teacher leadership in China, which makes this study significant for both Chinese and international experience.

Developing a Comprehensive Curriculum Framework for Teacher Mental Health Courses in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programmes

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 42

Mrs. WEILIN YAN (University of Birmingham)

The persistent mental health challenges within classrooms pose significant concerns for children, adolescents, young adults, and teachers/new teachers, with considerable economic, social and health repercussions. Schools, reaching nearly all children and their families, are frequently recognized by research and policy as crucial settings to promote the mental and physical well-being of young people. With the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among children and adolescents, teachers' roles have expanded beyond academic instruction to include fostering students' overall social and emotional development. Due to their daily interactions with students, teachers are well-positioned to identify those who may be at risk, support the planning and implementation of early interventions, and participate in referring students to appropriate mental health services when needed.

Despite this potential, teachers from around the world report feeling incompetent, ill-prepared and lacking formal training in mental health, impacting their ability to carry out their diverse roles to support students effectively. Meanwhile, teachers can struggle with their own mental well-being, with new teachers, particularly vulnerable to the pressures and complexities of their roles. These early-career educators often experience significant pressures and immense challenges from multiple, overlapping expectations related to teaching, assessment, and professional learning, imposed by employers, school administrations, colleagues, parents, and students. Preparing student teachers with mental health knowledge, the skills and competencies needed to manage these demands are therefore essential, making Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs a vital component in equipping them for this ever-expanding role when entering the teaching profession.

Currently, insufficient attention and training are given to the development and provision of required dispositions and competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and effective methods for mental health promotion in ITE programmes. Against this background, the focus of the research being undertaken is an exploration of teacher educators, student teachers and school mentors' perspectives and experiences related to mental health courses and provision in ITE Programmes in China and the UK. Given that educational systems, social and cultural backgrounds, and professional qualifications differ across countries, the challenges related to promoting students' and teachers' mental health and well-being, nevertheless, are similar.

This is the first stage involved in the research and will focus on the following research questions: How do different higher education institutions currently address mental health courses/training in their ITE programmes (taking one Chinese higher education institution and one British university as examples), and what can be learned from models? Using semi-structured focus group interviews with student teachers, teacher educators and school mentors, this study intends to provide valuable insights for initial teacher education providers (ITEPs), university administrators, teaching staff and wider society on improving mental health support and fostering the well-being of student teachers during the Initial Teacher Education Programme.

Parallel Session 4

School leaders’ experiences of policy enactment in a time of crisis: navigating the pandemic and beyond

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 110

Dr. Joan Mowat (University of Strathclyde), Dr. Anna Beck (University of Glasgow)

This paper draws from a mixed-methods, principally qualitative longitudinal study conducted with two cohorts of Into Headship students exploring how they supported their school communities during the first lockdown in the UK in the spring of 2000 and beyond, with a particular emphasis on children and young people (C&YP) considered to be vulnerable through disability, poverty or otherwise disadvantaged.

Across the world, the pandemic has served to amplify and exacerbate existing inequalities for C&YP, particularly those who are marginalised through poverty, displacement and/or disability. *The Health Behaviour in School Children* report on Europe identified that adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to report negative effects of the pandemic in two thirds of countries/regions whether or not they were in receipt of support from family, teachers, classmates or peers. The *COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities* (COSMO) study (Nov 2023) found that there were significant disparities in access to support services between children living in poverty and those living in more affluent areas, with the former more than twice as likely not to be in receipt of support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Responses to the *COVID Inquiry* and *Additional Support for Learning Inquiry* conducted in Scotland in 2024, highlight a wide range of detrimental impacts upon the wellbeing of C&YP, such as heightened anxiety leading to a reluctance to attend school.

During this period, school leaders had to navigate an unprecedented landscape of complex and rapid change. The quality of headship preparation programmes becomes crucial in ensuring that prospective headteachers can rise to the challenge.

The study was conducted in two phases: the first a questionnaire issued to both cohorts in June 2020 towards the end of the first lockdown in the UK; the second, 8 individual interviews and 3 focus group discussions across secondary, primary and special education sectors conducted in January 2023. A key theme to emerge from analysis of phase 1 was the importance of supporting the wellbeing of the school community, therefore the 2nd phase honed in on this theme. Data was thematically analysed using King and Horrock’s (2010) framework. This paper brings together the findings from both the interviews and focus group discussions, integrating across sectors to highlight key messages.

Despite facing a number of challenges, the former students on the programme demonstrated the ability to navigate an increasingly complex and volatile policy landscape due to an enhanced level of political literacy; insight into their value systems, their leadership and the role of headship; and growing confidence in their capacity to lead and develop leadership capacities in others, the development of which was supported by engagement in the Into Headship programme. Extensive exemplification was offered of the creative and innovative ways in which they sought collaboratively to build community and to support the wellbeing of their school communities. We reflect on the critical role that Masters-level professional learning can play in supporting school leaders to become confident policy actors, and the implications of this for current education reform.

A Review of Instructional Leadership in Crisis-Affected Schools: School Administrators’ Roles and Competencies in Human-Made Crises

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 282

Ms. Lalakhanim Orujova (University of South Florida)

Abstract

Instructional leaders promote academic success by defining attainable goals for students and teachers, using data-driven methods to track progress, and recognizing achievements. These techniques create an “academic press” that promotes high standards and strong expectations throughout schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990). Their active participation in curriculum and instruction, as well as close collaboration with teachers, demonstrate a hands-on leadership style that benefits both teaching and learning (Cuban, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). By remaining visible and giving direct support, instructional leaders display a thorough awareness of classroom difficulties, model effective techniques, and inspire a shared commitment to academic performance. While instructional leadership has been shown to drive positive change in stable environments, its adaptability is severely tested when schools face unexpected and destabilizing crises—events that challenge an organization’s core values, threaten its survival, and necessitate quick decision-making (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). In educational settings, such crises necessitate leaders balancing immediate consequences with long-term recovery in order to sustain the continuity and stability of the school’s mission.

UNESCO (n.d.) estimates that 244 million children worldwide are currently affected by crises such as armed wars, health and climate-related disasters, and forced displacement. Despite the gravity of the situation, there is a considerable gap in the research regarding the precise leadership skills required to overcome these obstacles (Striepe & Cunningham, 2022). Research on educational leadership during human-caused crises, particularly in conflict zones, is quite limited (Striepe & Cunningham, 2022). This scoping literature review fills these gaps by exploring the instructional leadership techniques necessary in schools affected by human-caused catastrophes.

Research question: *What does the literature reveal about the instructional leadership of administrators during human-made crises?* The scoping review approach to systematically map and analyze existing literature on the instructional leadership of school administrators during human-made crises. Following Arksey and O’Malley’s scoping review framework, this review is organized into five stages: **(1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting studies, (4) charting data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting results.**

Significant findings: 1) To build a stable learning environment, principals adapted teaching practices to accommodate students’ emotional and intellectual needs, including social-emotional learning (SEL) and emphasizing vital curriculum. 2) Curriculum adjustments, such as reducing curriculum and prioritizing basic areas, preserved educational continuity despite reduced instructional time and resources. 3) Schools incorporated trauma support, such as bereavement counseling and emotional care programs, into teaching techniques, thereby stabilizing students’ emotional well-being and indirectly supporting academic engagement. 4) Crisis-responsive pedagogy professional development provided teachers with the tools they needed to change instruction, emotionally assist students, and maintain instructional quality in tough situations. 5) Principals employed flexible and creative teaching strategies, such as hybrid learning models, play-based learning, and safety-focused education, to maintain student interest and adapt to crisis restrictions.

Navigating Turbulence: Leadership in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) During Crises

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 44

Dr. Susan H. Shapiro (Touro), Dr. Serra Acar (University of Massachusetts Boston), Ms. Maria Kastanis (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign)

Current crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of natural disasters have underscored the fragility of social systems, particularly in the realm of education. Early childhood intervention (ECI) and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), serving children with diverse learning and developmental needs, has been uniquely impacted. Disruptions to routines, service provision, and family support systems have highlighted the critical need for resilient, adaptive leadership. This session, aligned with the conference theme of “Turbulence, Reform, and Development in Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration,” focuses on the pivotal role of leadership in navigating crises within the ECI, SEND context.

This session will delve into the question of how can leadership can ensure the sustainability, accessibility, and quality of ECI services during turbulent times. It will explore the multifaceted challenges faced by educational leaders, educators, children, and families during crises, such as those related to service delivery, communication, equity, and mental health. By focusing on the Education Crisis Framework (ECF) (Shapiro, 2024) The Education Crisis Framework (ECF) is a two-part model designed to help schools navigate crises. ECF consists of a decision-making model that emphasizes community understanding, trust, and compassion, and an action model focused on immediate response, communication, and future planning. Through this framework we will highlight effective strategies and innovative approaches employed by leaders to navigate these challenges, including examples of successful crisis management, technological integration, family engagement, and collaborative partnerships through the voices of leaders in multiple settings and countries (i.e., USA, Greece, Turkey, UK). We will also discuss practical tools and knowledge to equip current and aspiring leaders with the skills needed to support and sustain education and high-quality services in the face of future crises, whether they be health-related, economic, or societal that affect and/or interrupt education.

This session is significant for educational practice due to its exploration of the dynamics of leadership in early childhood education during times of crisis, focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by leaders in this field. Drawing on recent experiences, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and recent environmental disasters, we analyze how early childhood leaders navigated uncertainty, maintained communication with families, and adapted to rapidly changing guidelines. We will identify key leadership strategies that foster resilience and innovation, emphasizing the importance of empathy, collaboration, and community engagement. We will highlight how effective leadership not only supports educators and staff but also promotes a sense of security and continuity for young children and their families. By examining these practices, we aim to provide insights for current and future leaders, equipping them with the tools to thrive in crisis situations while prioritizing the needs of children and families.

How Empowering Leadership Shapes Teachers’ E-learning Commitment: The Mediating Effect of Teacher Leadership

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 183

Mrs. Muna Al-Alawi (Sultan Qaboos University), Dr. Yasser Al-Mahdy (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University)

The rapid advancement of educational technology has necessitated school leadership that effectively drives digital transformation and fosters meaningful teacher engagement. Empowering leadership plays a critical role in creating an environment that motivates teachers, enhances their leadership capacities, and strengthens their commitment to achieving educational goals. In response to the global shift toward e-learning, particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of school principals in adopting empowering leadership strategies has become increasingly significant in facilitating teachers’ transition to digital teaching practices.

This study investigates the impact of empowering leadership among government school principals in the Sultanate of Oman on teachers’ leadership behaviors and their affective commitment to e-learning. It further explores the mediating role of teacher leadership in the relationship between empowering leadership and teachers’ commitment to change, evaluating the extent and nature of this mediation. While previous research has examined the role of leadership styles in educational transformation, limited studies have specifically explored how empowering leadership fosters teacher leadership and enhances commitment to e-learning in the context of government schools in the Arab world. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence from Oman, contributing to a deeper understanding of leadership mechanisms in digital education adoption.

Employing a quantitative research design, the study collected cross-sectional data from a sample of 750 teachers in government schools using validated and contextually adapted scales for empowering leadership, teacher leadership, and affective commitment to change. The research model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess direct and indirect effects and determine the mediating role of teacher leadership.

The findings indicate that empowering leadership positively influences both teacher leadership and teachers’ affective commitment to e-learning. Furthermore, teacher leadership significantly enhances teachers’ commitment to change and partially mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and affective commitment. This suggests that while empowering leadership directly promotes teacher engagement with e-learning, the development of teacher leadership serves as an essential mechanism that strengthens this commitment.

These results underscore the necessity of fostering empowering leadership in schools to facilitate educational transformation and ensure sustainable engagement with digital learning. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education develop targeted training programs to enhance school principals’ ability to implement empowering leadership practices, with a specific focus on fostering teacher leadership and strengthening commitment to e-learning. Additionally, continuous professional development initiatives and clear policy guidelines should be provided to support both principals and teachers in navigating digital transformation effectively.

By addressing an existing research gap, this study advances theoretical understanding of how leadership styles influence teacher behavior in digital learning environments. The implications extend to policy development, professional growth, and the sustainability of e-learning practices, offering practical insights for educational reform and innovation. Future research could explore longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of empowering leadership on teacher leadership and digital education adoption.

Keywords: Empowering Leadership, Teacher Leadership, Affective Commitment to Change, E-learning, Sultanate of Oman.

Parallel Session 4

Turbulent Times: Student homelessness and educational leadership in natural disaster

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 277

Dr. Alexandra Pavlakis (Southern Methodist University), Dr. J. Kessa Roberts (Utah State University), Dr. Meredith Richards (Southern Methodist University), Dr. Mai Zaru (Southern Methodist University)

Background/Relevance: Natural disasters hinder students’ attendance, achievement, and wellbeing—and climate change makes disasters more likely. During crises, U.S. educational leaders play vital roles in assessing needs, collaborating with communities, and distributing resources. Natural disasters both cause and exacerbate housing instability, but there is a dearth of research on its implications for student homelessness. Even in the absence of disaster, educational leaders often struggle to address student homelessness. Students experiencing homelessness, who are disproportionately Black and/or Latine, often have high rates of school dropout and low grades.

Context: In August of 2017, Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, hit Houston, Texas. The second most expensive storm in the U.S., it destroyed about 25% of the city’s affordable housing. Many schools experienced damage, causing closures and relocations. Nearly 24,000 students in Houston’s largest school district became homeless from Harvey.

Theory/Framework: Natural disasters are often not random; vulnerability and responses to disasters are tied to poverty, race, and geography. This paper garners insights from Environmental Justice Theory, which focuses on the uneven distribution of hazards for low-income communities of color, and Critical Environmental Justice Theory (CEJ), which emphasizes how intersectional identities and inequities overlap.

Purpose/Research Question: The purpose of this paper was to examine how Harvey shaped student homelessness.

Methods: We draw from 9 semi-structured interviews with key district-level educational leaders, 10 with parents experiencing homelessness, and 19 with anti-poverty community leaders. We also conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis of 135 media artifacts.

Findings: We discuss our findings along the *preparation*, *response*, and *recovery* stages of natural disaster. Harvey’s impact on student homelessness began before the hurricane landed; the *preparation phase* contributed to new and extended stints of homelessness as the ability to prepare in advance was a privilege not available to everyone. In the *response phase*, the city lost substantial housing supply, displacing many of the district’s families. The school district received an influx of donations from around the country. A “Houston Strong” mentality emerged, which focused on helping others. As some families became homeless for the first time, there was increased awareness and empathy towards student homelessness and the importance of non-academic educational support services. Yet, after the initial shock, the *recovery phase* unearthed blaring inequities. Educational leaders reported students often crying at school when it rains. Families and communities were attempting to rebuild, but only able to do so at different paces, with access to uneven resources, and from dramatically distinct starting points. Educational and community leaders were still grappling with the impacts of Harvey on student homelessness years later.

Significance/Implications for Practice: Our study is aligned to the BELMAS theme and the *Leadership in Times of Crisis* and *Leadership for Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice* strands because it foregrounds the equity challenges for educational leaders in times of turbulent crisis. Due to climate change, this work is particularly timely and has implications for policy and practice. By better understanding Hurricane Harvey and student homelessness, leaders may be better situated to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the next crisis.

The Scholarly Practitioner and Social Justice: The EdD as a Bridge between Turbulence and Reform

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 106

Dr. Elizabeth Reilly (California State University), Dr. Jill Perry (University of Pittsburgh)

Background

This paper examines how U.S.-based PK-20 educational leaders who graduated from Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED)-influenced EdD programs experienced in their academic work and then applied to their workplace CPED Principle 1: Employing equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems (CPED, 2009; Buss et al., 2014; Author, 2020). Further, this paper examines how the lenses of equity, ethics, and justice have enhanced graduates’ abilities to be *scholarly practitioners* (Piantanida et al., 2019) in their professional settings, applying theory to practice to implement equitable, ethical, and just change in their educational organizations. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of the role that themes of justice play in EdD education in the United States.

Research Aim

The data analyzed for this paper are derived from two questions taken from a larger study:

1. In your doctoral program, how did equity, ethics, and social justice help you address solutions to complex problems of practice?
2. Today, how do equity, ethics, and social justice help you address solutions to complex problems of practice?

Methods

The snowball sample included 23 individuals who graduated from two CPED-influenced university EdD programs in the Western and Eastern United States. Participants included individuals from a variety of leadership roles in U.S. PK-20 education. One-hour interviews took place via Zoom. Data were analyzed using a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin, 2006) to place practitioner voice at the center of the leadership experience.

Key Findings

We highlight here three themes of several: 1) Graduates from both programs name and frame problems they encountered in practice with equity, ethics, and justice to see the impact of these problems (and past solutions) on marginalized groups (Freire, 1996; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; hooks, 2014). 2) Graduates expressed how their learning shifted in how they view their organizations and their leadership abilities—now applying these lenses to be more inclusive, analytical, and impactful, but sometimes having to do so in very covert ways. 3) Graduates also indicated their role as scholarly practitioners meant they now had the responsibility to educate members of their organizations on issues of equity, ethics, and justice, often sharing relevant scholarly articles with colleagues and empowering teams to gather data in the workplace.

Significance

This study provides guidance for educational leadership faculty who prepare educational leaders to examine the role of equity, ethics, and social justice at a time where many universities’ schools/colleges of education in the United States and across the world are facing unprecedented challenges to curriculum and programs that address these themes. This study may inspire other EdD program educators to learn more about their graduates and the impact of their programs in preparing scholarly practitioners and in demonstrating the importance of continuous improvement in programs to meet the changing challenges educational leaders face. Finally, this study invites further investigation regarding how to navigate politically fraught landscape to provide educators with tools necessary to ensure they lead in PK-20 through an equity lens.

Understanding principal adaptive leadership in Oman: the case of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in public schools

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 38

Dr. Waheed Hammad (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University), Dr. Alsaeed Alshamy (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University), Prof. Aisha Al-Harthi (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University)

The growing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education raises concerns and challenges for school leadership, particularly in the Arab region, where adapting to educational change can be more complex. In Oman, integrating technology in school education has been a key theme on the educational reform agenda since the early 1990s. However, implementation has always been hampered by obstacles, which can be even more pronounced with the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as AI. This study employs Heifetz and Linsky's (2009) adaptive leadership theory to explore the perceptions of school principals regarding the integration of AI in Omani schools, and how they envision their leadership role in this process. Adaptive leadership provides a relevant framework when addressing complex challenges that require changes in behavior, attitudes, and organizational culture. Within this framework, the study explains the process of AI integration by school principals through four aspects of adaptive leadership: *identifying adaptive challenges*, *managing distress*, *giving work back to people*, and *protecting voices of leadership from below*. Thus, the study's research questions are:

1. How do school principals in Oman distinguish between the technical and adaptive challenges associated with AI integration?
2. How do school principals intend to regulate the stress and anxiety that may arise among teachers and students during the process of AI integration?
3. How do school principals perceive their role in empowering their school communities and mobilizing them to address the adaptive challenges of AI integration?
4. What are school principals' proposed strategies to protect diverse voices, including those with dissenting perspectives, during the AI integration process?

To answer these questions, a qualitative research design was employed. Data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 15 school principals from government schools in Muscat. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings will be presented and discussed in light of existing literature. Given the paucity of this kind of research in the Arab region, we envisage that our findings will provide valuable insights and contribute to this line of inquiry.

‘There’s a real mismatch between the accountability and the autonomy and the decision making’: Headteacher perspectives of school leadership within a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 246

Dr. Mark Gibson (Oxford Brookes University), Dr. Deborah Outhwaite (The London School of Economics and Political Science)

The paper will draw upon a current research project that explores the school leadership challenges within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) in England. Although Academy Schools, state-funded private schools, were first created at the beginning of this century, their numbers were substantially increased in the decade following the new Coalition Government from 2010. Schools became organised in groups, MATs, with new governance and leadership structures.

Further to this, new actors, such as DfE Regional Directors, have emerged, and schools are frequently ‘re-brokered’ and moved from one MAT to another. Once they have joined a MAT, schools are not free to move to another nor move back to Local Authority control.

This research is small-scale, qualitative, multiple case study, using semi-structured interviews, with ethical approval from a UK university. The sampling was a mixture of opportunistic and purposive, with snowballing used to increase the sample size. The project aims to explore the relationship and leadership challenges of individual school leaders within a MAT, addressing the issues at a micro level. The object here is to explore the decision-making process and context from the perspective of these academy school leaders. There was a single, overarching, Research Question of What are the leadership and management challenges of working within a MAT?

Some early initial findings of the project were reported upon at the BELMAS conference in 2024, the data collection is ongoing and will be complete by July 2025, when we can offer our final findings.

Early data indicates ongoing problems with school and MAT leader relationships. Some cases found the nature of the MAT changed over time as it became more autocratic and less collaborative. Individual school autonomy was a key issue with some MATs controlling individual school finances and hence decisions over such areas as staffing and training and policy development. A further issue was that of accountability. School headteachers were concerned that the MAT was making decisions for which the individual headteachers would be accountable for to such external agencies like the inspection service Ofsted, not the MAT.

The present data appears to compliment earlier research by the authors and others but offers further insight into the role of the DfE Regional Director.

Parallel Session 4

Writing and Utilizing JCEL Cases to Develop Transformational Leaders

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 251

Dr. Nathern Okilwa (Baylor University), Dr. Curtis Brewer (University of Texas at San Antonio), Dr. Jo Jimerson (Texas Christian University)

The Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership (JCEL) publishes, in electronic format, peer-reviewed pedagogical cases appropriate for use in educational leadership preparation programs across the globe (see JCEL website). The University Council for Education Administration (UCEA) sponsors this journal, building on a long tradition of ongoing efforts to improve the preparation and practice of educational leadership. The journal’s editorial team seeks a wide range of cases that focus on timely and/or enduring issues germane to educational leadership preparation particularly given the current turbulent sociopolitical and socioeconomic times around the globe. One of our current goals is to increase the submission of JCEL cases from international scholars. We believe a session at the 2025 BELMAS conference will be instrumental in allowing the co-editors of the journal to expand our international scope.

The purpose of this session is twofold: familiarize session participants with JCEL cases and how they can be utilized in preparation and development of school leaders; and share guidelines for potential authors with the goal of having more international scholars submit cases for consideration for publication in the JCEL. The session will include the JCEL co-editors who have led the editorial mission of the journal for the past 5 years. We are motivated by scholarship that suggests there is benefit in teaching with case studies. That is, cases give aspiring school leaders opportunities to actively grapple with the ‘wicked problems’ of practice (Clarke, 2016; Jordan, Kleinsasser, & Roe, 2014; Peters, 2017) in education. Such efforts will help aspiring leaders to develop their skills in: problem solving, analysis, decision making in complex situations, and coping with ambiguities (Dunne & Brooks, 2004). Developing these skills is congruent with the structure embedded in JCEL cases around the four core elements of a good case: context, complexity, ambiguity, and relevance (Fossey & Crow, 2011). During the session, the presenters will highlight ways to use cases in university courses as well as in-service professional development and will provide author guidelines to successfully submit their own cases to the journal.

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Equity in Promotion: A Systematic Review of Diversity Challenges in Educational Leadership

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 32

Mr. Robert Hannan (University of Limerick), Dr. Niamh Lafferty (University of Limerick), Prof. Patricia Mannix-McNamara (University of Limerick)

This paper presents a systematic literature review exploring diversity in promotional practices within educational institutions at both primary and post-primary level, focusing on barriers faced by various demographic groups aspiring to the role of school principal globally. Analysing peer-reviewed studies from 2015 to 2024, this review identifies systemic challenges that affect promotional opportunities for candidates based on gender, race, age, and related diversity factors. The findings highlight persistent inequities in hiring practices despite some improvements in diversity initiatives, underscoring the complex interplay between personal attributes, cultural expectations, and structural biases that hinder underrepresented groups across the globe.

The review examines educational contexts across diverse settings, including the United States, Ireland, Australia, Indonesia, and Ethiopia, revealing that gender disparities remain pronounced, especially for women balancing familial responsibilities. Additionally, racial and ethnic minorities, particularly in contexts where educational leadership roles are traditionally homogenous, face barriers rooted in implicit biases and limited access to supportive networks. Women of colour, in particular, face a “double-jeopardy” when it comes to applying for principalship roles. A recurring theme of “person-organisation fit” emerges, raising concerns about the fairness of promotional processes that favour cultural conformity over diverse competencies.

Methodologically, this review utilised the PRISMA framework to ensure transparency and rigour in identifying relevant studies. The search strategy employed Boolean operators and refined search terms. The review’s framework incorporates influential concepts from workforce diversity and organisational performance literature, highlighting leadership expertise and diversity beliefs as critical factors in fostering equitable promotional practices.

The paper concludes by advocating for more inclusive and transparent promotional processes that recognise diverse competencies and mitigate bias. It also recommends policy reforms that integrate structured mentorship and diversity-focused leadership development initiatives to facilitate equitable career progression for underrepresented groups in educational leadership roles. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on achieving diversity and inclusion in educational leadership and underscores the importance of aligning promotional practices with broader diversity and equity goals.

Are Educational Leaders Ready for the AI Revolution? Exploring AI Literacy’s Role in Shaping Leadership, Policy, and Innovation

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 167

Dr. Alaa Mohasseb (University of Portsmouth)

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education is transforming leadership in decision-making, policy development, and innovation. This exploratory research highlights the need for educational leaders to have AI literacy that goes beyond technical skills to include ethical awareness and understanding AI’s potential impact. Leaders proficient in AI can better drive innovation and manage ethical challenges. Using mixed methods, this study examines current AI literacy levels among higher education leaders and its link to leadership effectiveness.

Results show that AI engagement varies, influenced by institutional culture, and underscore the importance of equipping leaders with AI skills for informed, data-driven decisions. The study identifies barriers to AI literacy and stresses the need for professional development and institutional support. The findings open the door for further research into targeted strategies and long-term impacts of AI literacy on educational leadership, policy, and innovation. Additionally, the research offers strategies to help policymakers and educational leaders adapt to an AI-driven future with confidence and foresight.

Dangling in the glimmer of hope: Academic action on Truth and Reconciliation

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 12

Dr. Victoria Handford (Thompson Rivers University)

The devastating effects of colonization for Indigenous people are part of Canada's story, past and present. The inaccuracy of the histories as told by colonizers have caused harm, both to the settler population who were not properly educated in relation to Canada's history, and to the Indigenous populations who were harmed by the callousness and indifference these versions of history represented. The experiences of Canada's Indigenous populations, particularly in relation to residential schooling, resulted in intergenerational trauma and losses of identity and language. The 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) provide an accounting of specific actions Canadians need to take to demonstrate reconciliatory intent. Productive ways of living together and in partnership with the Indigenous populations can and must be the future for Canada.

A common criticism heard is 'those that should and must know better fail to act in ways that foster change – or even recognition of their part in the perpetuation of damage'. Action is personal. And all must act. Change continues to falter. This presentation will share one way our university faculty have worked together with Indigenous colleagues and neighbours to demonstrate our engagement and growing understanding of the needs for change. While we did not know that Justice Murray Sinclair would identify our approach as the approach Canadians need to take, this is what has occurred (Sinclair, 2023, 26:30). This presentation highlights the processes followed and the published action - academic and creative writing based on conversation and detail-checking with Indigenous colleagues and community Elders, who identified, in the words of Elder Mike Arnhouse, "Please don't let this stop here". And we didn't. This models one way forward that has evidence of making a difference. Gottfriedson, G., & Handford, V. (eds). (2024). *Dangling in the glimmer of hope: Academic action and the TRC Calls to Action*. University of Ottawa Press.

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Parallel Session 4

Collaborative leadership of teachers for the revitalization of students' career learning in virtual scenarios in special schools

Saturday, 5th July - 15:20: Parallel Session 4 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 139

Dr. Elson Szeto (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Teacher leaders of career education have faced various challenges due to the turbulent crises that emerged in different societies over the past 5 years. These challenges may continue to negatively affect professional teaching practices for students' learning development in different schools. Development of related career learning seems to be school-based professional practices based on related policies of an education system. Particularly, the career learning developments of students in special schools for mild intellectual disability (MID) plus other special educational needs and disabilities have been concerned seriously in the perspective of teacher leadership for equity, diversity, and social justice. Teacher leaders not only develop the career learning of every student with MID at the beginning of 12-year schooling, but also engage, revitalize, and support them in exploring career interests and pathways beyond secondary schooling. Although the related K-12 curriculum unexpectedly changed due to the continuing crisis, teacher leaders need to focus on potential reform of their professional practices for revitalization of young secondary school students' career learning and exploration in special schools. However, it is expected that secondary students' career exploration and learning can be revitalized with the use of appropriate technologies in schools at the times of different crises. The key question is: Can teacher leaders collaborate to reform professional practice for quality revitalization of students' career education across special schools instead of individually? To explore the answer to this question, a pilot case study of a special school for MID (School A) in collaboration with nine special schools in the Hong Kong education system has been conducted since 2020. The collaboration demonstrates experiential career learning of cooking safety in the virtual-reality kitchen of a restaurant as a mode of reforming professional practices for career education through the technologies. This reform is based on cross-school teacher leaders' collaboration. The teachers were to plan, design, and develop immersive scenarios of experiential career learning and exploration for students in a cave automatic virtual environment (CAVE). Ten students ($n = 10$; S1 to S10) from School A joined the pilot study as a career-based journey. The collected data included the students' responses to the career learning and development in the CAVE, and the teacher leader's reflection on the reform of instructional design across the institutions. The findings show that the teacher leader's collaboration with other teacher leaders formulated a common instructional design of career learning through virtual-reality scenarios in the CAVE. This is the focus of the collaboration to revitalize the students' positive career experiences for further thoughts of their career pathways after schooling. Other than S1, S3, and S5, the remaining seven students are expected to possibly consider their career goals, explore potential career opportunities, and plan potential career pathways. The participating students reflected on their good experience of inspiring career interests and pathways through the virtual-reality scenarios of cooking safety in the CAVE.

Mapping Executive Leadership in an English Multi-Academy Trust: From configurations to flows

Saturday, 5th July - 15:35: Parallel Session 4 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 296

Dr. Mike Collins (University of Nottingham)

Leadership of groups of schools has become commonplace in England with the growth of various types of multi-school arrangements and, particularly, multi-academy trusts (MATs). Roles associated with leadership in such groupings are frequently referred to as executive leadership, but there continues to be little consistency in how the term is used. There is also relatively little research into the practice of leadership in such contexts and the relevance of conceptualisations of school leadership are largely untested. This is a significant gap in the educational leadership research literature as MATs continue to be an important feature in the complex and fragmented English school system.

This paper aims to present an investigation into the nature of executive leadership in a MAT, applying a conceptualisation of leadership that builds on established school leadership literature, and to use the results and analysis as the basis of a discussion of the nature of leadership in this context.

The paper draws on empirical work which was part of a single embedded case study of a MAT investigating how the principal executive leader sought to bring about educational improvement in the schools for which the trust was responsible. The paper uses a key element of the case study, an exploration of the patterns of leadership relationships that emerged in the MAT, to analyse and develop some potential conceptual tools for thinking about executive leadership.

The conceptualisation of leadership is informed by recognising the complex nature of organisations generally, and in the novel educational forms that have emerged in recent times in particular. Leadership is understood as influence, and a relational view of its nature is adopted.

When investigating executive leadership in a trust, the focus is thus on the patterns of relationships beyond individual schools and on the substance of those relationships. The paper presents the design of the investigation which involved identifying the key group of leaders in the trust in an interview with the principal executive leader, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and then interviewing those leaders and mapping their perceptions of the relationships within that group. The resulting networks, known as cognitive social structures are presented alongside qualitative data from the interviews.

The analysis of the results exemplifies what Peter Gronn described as hybrid leadership configurations. Further combining the network analysis with qualitative data leads to a discussion of the limitations of the notion of hybrid leadership. In conclusion, some conceptual tools are proposed with which to capture the dynamic complexity of leadership in a MAT.

Cultural Alignment in Leadership: Advancing Educational Reforms Through Community Partnerships

Saturday, 5th July - 15:50: Parallel Session 4 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 280

Dr. Susan Davis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Objectives: Interconnected systems shape human development, including family, school, and community. However, mistrust and limited collaboration often hinder the formation of effective Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCPs), essential for addressing students’ well-being (Ishimaru, 2020). Students are not one person in school, another at home, and another in their community. They bring all their knowledge from various contexts (Ishimaru, 2020). It is critical to seek various supports and collaborations that enhance school success for students. Far too often, schools work in silos to support the education of students (Smith et al., 2020). This study examines the dynamics of FSCPs, how leadership practices, partnership dynamics, and cultural alignment influence educational innovations’ success, sustainability, and scalability through a case study of the implementation of a mindfulness-based program at the Western School District (WSD) as a strategy for fostering students’ social and emotional well-being. The study examines two key research questions: (1) How are leadership practices within FSCPs implemented to support mindfulness-based programs in diverse educational settings? and (2) How do these leadership practices contribute to sustainable community engagement and collaboration in educational innovations?

Methods: Using a case-study approach, this research was conducted in a suburban county characterized by socioeconomic and religious homogeneity. Data were collected through 14 semi-structured and unstructured interviews with school leaders, educators, and community members, alongside observations, community documents, and parent toolkits. Thematic analysis, guided by frameworks such as Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement (2011) and the Communities That Care (CTC) model, identified key themes, including trust-building, collaboration, cultural competence, communication, leadership, and resource allocation. The analysis also explored challenges in implementation, such as resource limitations and cultural tensions, and the strategies employed to navigate them.

Findings: The findings resulted in three core themes: (a) the role of leadership and partnership dynamics in fostering trust, (b) promoting collaboration, and (c) aligning educational initiatives with community values. Leaders demonstrated responsiveness by addressing community-specific needs, maintaining open communication, and building resource-sharing structures. Local CTC coalitions facilitated equitable participation, including marginalized voices and fostering a sense of shared ownership. The program’s cultural alignment enhanced community acceptance, particularly its incorporation of values like faith and service. Champions within the community drove grassroots advocacy, supporting the program’s scalability and sustainability. Leaders effectively addressed challenges such as cultural tensions and limited resources by employing collaborative problem-solving and adaptive strategies.

Conclusions: This study emphasizes the importance of culturally aligned leadership practices and the critical role leadership plays in fostering trust, engaging diverse stakeholders, and prioritizing cultural competence. As such, FSCPs can create sustainable and inclusive ecosystems for educational innovation. These findings align with BELMAS’s theme for this year, which focuses on “turbulence, reform, and development in educational leadership, management, and administration,” as it offers insights into how partnership-driven approaches can address complex challenges in diverse educational contexts.

A Scoping Review of Followership Research in Compulsory Schooling Contexts

Saturday, 5th July - 16:05: Parallel Session 4 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 215

Dr. Nicolaas Blom (University of Limerick), Prof. Denise Mifsud (University of Bath)

The concept of followership has been ignored in research on leadership, particularly within the structured and hierarchical environments of compulsory schooling. This scoping review seeks to map the existing literature on followership, offering insights into its implications for educational leadership. Employing Arksey and O'Malley's framework for scoping reviews and guided by the PRISMA methodology, 61 peer-reviewed articles published between 1984 and 2023 were systematically analysed. The review identifies dominant theoretical orientations, research methodologies, and thematic trends within the field.

Findings reveal that followership research in education remains largely entity-based, emphasizing formal roles and typologies, with limited exploration of relational and socio-constructivist perspectives. Empirical studies frequently focus on quantitative approaches, correlational designs, and teacher populations, with underrepresentation of middle leaders. Our thematic analysis highlights key areas of followership research, including its characteristics, interaction with leadership approaches, and its impact on organisational culture and outcomes. However, research gaps persist, particularly regarding cross-cultural contexts, intervention-based development of followership capacities, and qualitative explorations of leader-follower dynamics. This review contributes to the growing recognition of followership as an integral, yet underexplored, dimension of leadership, providing a foundation for advancing both theory and practice in this area.

Parallel Session 5

Educational leadership and school inspection amid turbulence: an examination of school leaders in coastal areas of deprivation.

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 268

Dr. Aly Colman (University College London)

Inspection practices undertaken by Ofsted (the principal school inspection system in England) have been through recent and rapid periods of change. This creates the potential for uncertainty in schools, especially given that school inspections in England are 'high stakes'. Educational leaders are required to seamlessly shift their daily practices in schools to align with inspection documents and other relevant policy texts. Public interest has been heightened following the tragic event of January 2023 when Head Teacher, Ruth Perry took her own life following an Ofsted inspection outcome. Recent shifts in inspection have therefore been necessary, with some changes already in place. These include the removal of one-word judgements for schools alongside other significant revisions. Further reform, however, is planned for September 2025 and includes a new re-worked Education Inspection Framework. While changes to inspection were much needed, this research examines the ways in which instability and uncertainty about school inspection impacts the work of educational leaders. Here, a wide view of educational leadership is taken to include all staff within the school who have a leadership responsibility, regardless of level of seniority.

New data is collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen primary and secondary school leaders in two English coastal areas of deprivation. Coastal contexts present a range of challenges including high unemployment, poor health, below average levels of academic attainment exacerbated through inter-generationality and schools often struggle with teacher and leadership recruitment and retention issues. Using a detailed multiple-case study to examine these specific features of coastal areas, the data demonstrates how school leaders enact policy in response to shifting arrangements for school inspection. Analysis includes perceptions of leaders on practices which adapt over time in response to shifts in school inspection and the tensions that exist between policy enactment and context. Drawing on the analysis of current leadership practices, recommendations for leading at a time of reform are shared.

The turbulent landscape for educational leadership is understood using theory drawn from a Foucauldian perspective and contributes to the emerging area of literature which considers the post-panoptic in the context of high-stakes inspections. While the research is located within English coastal towns, the findings will be useful for leaders and policy makers in other contextual environments including those in urban, rural and international settings.

The Politics of Place-based School Partnerships

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 20

Dr. Bee Hughes (University of Manchester)

The proliferation of place-based school partnerships has been a key feature in the English Education system for over thirty years. Incubated primarily in the Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones (formed in 1998), and the City Challenge initiatives in London (2003-2008), subsequently introduced in the Midlands and Greater Manchester from 2008-2011, the primary focus was reducing the number of underperforming schools, and increasing educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The premise was centred on addressing educational issues at the local area level where Local Authorities and schools could work together to achieve these aims. The increased importance placed on school leaders at the time through the development of leadership programmes delivered by the National College of School Leadership and the relevance and importance placed on system leadership roles such as National Leaders and Local of Education (NLE and LLE's) were seen as important factors in contributing to the success of these programmes. The City Challenge project was generally regarded as successful in its initial aims, (Hutchins et 2012).

The current education landscape in England is somewhat different however, with the disintermediation of local authorities and the academisation project which has resulted in the education system being described as 'fragmented' with over seventy different types of schools operating (and oftentimes competing with each other) in England, (Courtney 2015). The school improvement agenda is located in a complex set of stakeholders operating within and across the system. The absence of significant education policy from 2016-2024 under the Conservative government, has enabled a diverse array of partnerships operating at the local level comprising Local Authority representatives, school leaders, CEOs of MATs and other stakeholders. These are often referred to as area-based partnerships. The aim of this paper is to examine the politics of these partnerships which fill the liminal space between the state and local education providers. In so doing it analyses empirical data gathered from the Area Based Partnership Project (2021-2023) to present insights into how these partnerships are formed, their composition and the politics behind them. In so doing I utilise Arendtian thinking to critically explain that such partnerships are inherently revolutionary and political.

Arendt (2016) offers insightful thinking on revolution where she posits that revolution itself is about freedom and liberation. For Arendt such freedom encompasses self-government, where often revolutions begin something new, requiring a new kind of leadership. She argues for a reconstitution of power, a restoration or 'revealing' something back to a 're-established past.' In analysing the constitution and practices of area-based partnerships I illumine the revolutionary politics involved in re-establishing a past, through disrupting present structures such as MATs and thus creating new ways of working in supporting school improvement. I argue that these area-based partnerships are politically complex, are challenged by competing demands but can have a significant influence on creating a locally constituted self-improving school system.

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Swedish School principals contradictory class location – Expanding the theoretical understanding of social pressure on school leaders

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 272

Dr. Magnus Larsson (Centre for Principal Development, Department of Political Science, Umeå University)

This paper seeks to further the research on social pressure on school principals and expand how it can be theoretically appraised. The social pressure put upon principals today is increasingly apparent. Much effort has been put into researching social pressure on school principals including how expectations affect social pressure (Leo, 2015) and how the governance system and educational reforms can affect the social pressure placed on school principals (Ärlestig & Leo, 2023). Less attention has been placed on how school principals perceive social pressure and its relation to their class position, a question that is interlinked with reform and development of the principal profession. This is even though the principal profession in Sweden and in many other countries have moved from a position of a teacher with administrative tasks (the first among equals) to school managers accountable for staff, resources and other managerial tasks (Jarl et al, 2012) effectively rearranging the class position of school principals. In this paper I argue that this historical shift has placed school principals in a contradictory class location. Following Erik Olin Wrights argument, that certain occupations occupy “contradictory” positions within class relations because they share characteristics with both the dominant and subordinate classes, the paper sets out to explore how school principals’ perception of social pressure can be understood through their contradictory class location.

Given this background, the research question posed in this paper is:

How can Swedish school principals’ perception of social pressure be understood through the theory of contradictory class location?

The empirical part of the paper emanates from a research project focused on how principals’ perceive controversial issues in turbulent times. Controversial issues include subjects that are difficult to manage and include aspects of social pressure and is therefore useful for exploring school principals understanding of social pressure. The study builds on 26 in-depth interviews with Swedish principals where they were asked what they find controversial in their role as a principal. The principals included in the study was collected with a heterogeneous sample approach in mind (Ritchie et al., 2014). This process started by identifying central categories of principals so as to ensure that the sample included respondents in different contexts and with different underlying factors. The categories we identified were gender, different educational levels, city/countryside, schools with different educational outcomes, and experienced and new principals.

Tentative results show that how principals perceive social pressure can to significant extent be understood through their contradictory class location. In many instances the principals perceived typical managerial tasks such as managing staff or handling resources as controversial and in extension increasing social pressure. Furthermore, navigating between allegiances with teachers on one hand and the local administration board on the other is perceived to increase social pressure. These findings were interpreted as examples of how the inherent contradictory class location of the school principal profession amplify social pressure. These findings amount to potential new avenues for further research regarding school principals and social pressure.

Seismic shifts in English state funded Catholic Education: Can headteachers exercise leadership as their autonomy diminishes or have they become managers?

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Renaissance Suite) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 221

Dr. Mary Mihovilovic (St Mary's University)

This paper explores the recent changes in the organisation of English state funded Catholic school, whereby individual schools have joined Multi Academy Trusts led by Chief Executive Officers in the context of a government agenda that all state funded schools will join MATs by 2030 and the diminishing powers of local authorities. A documentary analysis of Catholic Multi Academy (CMAT) policies and a qualitative study of the perspectives of headteachers suggest that this seismic systemic change offers both opportunities and challenges, albeit in a time of turbulence. Career progression, teacher recruitment and retention, curriculum leadership and economies of scale are some of the opportunities identified, whilst the impact on the identity of the individual school, a loss of financial independence and the training of Directors are seen as challenges. I argue that this is a point of inflection greater than any change or challenge to the system since the 1944 Education Act and as such warrants extensive research to enable leaders and Boards to best serve their pupils and students.

Parallel Session 5

The accidental CEO – a study of founding CEOs in Multi-Academy Trusts

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 128

Ms. Eleanor Bernardes (University of Nottingham)

The pace of change in the English education system over the last twenty years has led to the creation of a wholly new type of organisational structure for school leadership – the multi academy trust (MAT). These MATs have formed in a myriad of different ways, through several waves of the Academies Programme, each underpinned by differing ideological assumptions.

This is a significant new role, and one that has emerged organically and unplanned. Situated in the ‘Governance and Policy’ strand, this paper will use a theoretical lens of ‘sensemaking’ and ‘sensegiving’ to explore the professional background and personal drivers and dispositions of six Multi Academy Trust founding CEOs, with a focus on both the breadth of their experiences before founding their MATs alongside their reflections on how they interacted with the policy environment of the time, and navigated their way through a period of great turbulence, reform and development in the sector.

This paper will draw on the existing literatures on multi academy trust policy and leadership, alongside new interview and survey data taken from my wider PhD study of executive founder succession in MATs. The data has been collected using a mixed-methods research design and comprises of semi-structured sector informant interviews (with both policy makers and MAT Founders), a national online questionnaire, and six in-depth case studies of founder succession events in MATs utilising a comparative case study approach (CCS). Three of these case studies captured historical CEO succession events, while three were ‘live’ (i.e. including pre, during and post interviews with founder CEOs, successor CEOs, Trust Chairs and key executive personnel).

This new empirical data supports previous research that has found that school leaders create and/or join MATs for a variety of different reasons, including those motivated by entrepreneurial opportunities, and those driven by fear of being “gobbled up” by bigger organisations. However, this research also shows that in the majority of the six case studies, the decision to form a MAT came as the result of situational motivations driven by the turbulence of the policy environment in which these leaders were working. As highly networked individuals with strong reputations for school leadership, these leaders reflected on finding themselves being informally nominated by their headteacher peers for the role of Accounting Officer before there was any real clarity on what the role involved, or indeed finding themselves the only person willing to do it. In this way they became ‘accidental CEOs’. This paper will explore the implications this has had on the organisations they have led, and the sector they have shaped.

Decentralisation of educational governance and leadership in Iceland: Implications for reform and development

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 166

Dr. Sigríður Margrét Sigurðardóttir (University of Akureyri), Dr. Rúnar Sigþórsson (University of Akureyri)

This paper explores the development of governance and leadership at the national and municipal levels in Iceland following the decentralisation reform of compulsory education in 1996. The study is based on governance and leadership theories and is informed by New Public Management (NPM) perspectives. It aims to examine how national authorities have supported municipalities in their new roles and how municipalities have developed leadership capacities to fulfil their educational responsibilities. The paper also draws on leadership theories to analyse the interplay between individual and systemic capacity in navigating these changes.

The research employed an embedded case study design to investigate educational governance and leadership. Four distinct units of analysis informed the study: document analysis of national policies and legislation, a nationwide survey of municipal and school leaders, and in-depth case studies of seven municipalities. Data collection included interviews with superintendents, department heads, and school principals, offering insights into leadership practices, policy enactment, and the challenges of providing school support services. Additional data were gathered through reviews of municipal policy documents and websites.

Icelandic municipalities vary significantly in size, population, and resources and the findings reveal significant disparities in leadership capacity and governance practices among them. While some larger municipalities have been able to build robust governance and leadership structures, some of the smaller and more remote ones struggle with resource limitations and difficulties in recruiting skilled personnel. The reliance on individual leaders rather than systemic leadership capacity highlights the system's vulnerability. Furthermore, limited support and oversight from national authorities have led to fragmented governance, with municipalities varying greatly in their ability to enact policies and provide equitable educational opportunities.

The study underscores that effective decentralisation requires more than transferring responsibilities; it demands cohesive national support and a deliberate focus on building local leadership and governance infrastructures. In the absence of such measures, decentralisation risks amplifying existing inequalities. The Icelandic case demonstrates the importance of investing in human resource development and fostering collaborative governance models to ensure equity and sustainability in decentralised systems.

This paper engages with themes of governance and policy, leadership effectiveness and improvement, and leadership development. The methodological approach furthermore provides insights into educational leadership and governance research, emphasising the importance of contextualised studies in understanding the dynamics of decentralised education systems. The paper highlights the strengths and challenges of Iceland's governance and leadership in the wake of significant decentralisation reform and offers valuable insights for countries undergoing similar system reform. The findings contribute to understanding the complexities of balancing local autonomy with national oversight in educational governance. They have significant implications for policymakers, suggesting that decentralisation should be accompanied by frameworks that promote equity, coherence, and capacity building.

Examining China’s Policy Response to Education Inequality: A Policy Analysis of the Double Reduction Policy in Western China

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 240

Ms. Sinnie Wu (The University of Manchester)

Education inequality in China has been amplified by the rise of shadow education (private tutoring focused on school academic subjects) and the uneven distribution of quality school resources. In response, the Chinese government introduced the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) to regulate shadow education, alleviate academic burdens both within and outside of school, and promote equitable resource distribution. While existing research has examined this policy’s influences on student well-being, the tutoring industry downturn, and potential or practical policy challenges facing the reality, limited research has systematically explored its role in addressing education resource disparities across different regions in China and its role in addressing hard issues that obstruct social justice in education.

This qualitative study investigates the Chinese government’s rationale for addressing education inequalities by examining policy discourses and local government officials’ perspectives. It addresses the following research questions: i. How does the Chinese government conceptualise education inequality as reflected in the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) documents? ii. How has the Chinese government responded to education inequality through the DRP? iii. How do local governmental practitioners and school education leaders interpret the DRP and perceive its practical effects on education inequality?

Aligning with a critical realist standing, this study focuses on a province in Western China to conduct policy analysis within its wider and domestic contexts. Drawing on Nancy Fraser’s theory of social justice, this study analyses 40 policy documents spanning the national level, a western province level, and the municipal level within the western province, along with six interviews with three local education officials and three school leaders from the same province to gain insights into how policy rationales are understood and enacted in practice.

Preliminary findings suggest that the DRP, as an affirmative distributive remedy, seeks to reduce reliance on private tutoring and narrow disparities in education resources outside of schools; however, it has largely overlooked the fact of uneven distribution of quality education resources during policy practice across regions. As a result, families continue seeking shadow education, thereby undermining the policy’s effectiveness and goal of achieving education equity. The research also highlights how local governments navigate national directives while addressing regional realities, revealing potential challenges and complexities in policy enactment. Moreover, the study anticipates identifying key attributes of the Chinese policy response to education inequalities within a neo-socialist context and reflecting generic governance characteristics in China’s education system.

By contextualizing these findings within China’s neo-socialist context, this research offers a distinct Eastern perspective on government responses to education inequalities intensified by the marketisation trend during the recent four decades. Further, it contributes to global discussions on policymaking, achieving equity, and the intricate and interesting interplay between national policy framework and local policy practices.

Policy Gymnastics: policy values and leadership contortions in the emergence of Multi-Academy Trusts

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Noblesse) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 95

Prof. Toby Greany (University of Nottingham), Ms. Eleanor Bernardes (University of Nottingham), Mrs. Helen Angell (University of Nottingham)

The Academies Act was passed in 2010 by the newly elected Conservative-led Coalition Government. It made provision for Local Authority (LA) maintained schools in England to convert to academies, which are funded and overseen by national (rather than local) government. 14 years later, the landscape is transformed: two in five primary schools and four in five secondary schools are now academies. However, whereas academies were originally positioned as highly autonomous, with additional ‘freedoms’ compared with other schools, most academies have now been subsumed into a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), meaning they cease to exist as a separate legal entity. The early promise of academy ‘freedoms’ has thus been replaced by a MAT-led model in which schools have less autonomy than before. The MAT-run system was not planned from the outset, so has required various gymnastic contortions, often driven by competing values and logics.

This paper examines the evolution of policy on academies and MATs in England (2010-24), drawing out implications for leadership at policy and practice levels. We draw on an analysis of relevant literature and policy texts and are informed by our own work as variously researchers, policymakers and practitioners in this arena. We draw on Jenny Stewart’s conceptual framework of how values conflicts are managed in policy to argue that academy/MAT policy contortions have relied on four key mechanisms:

- A new policy paradigm – pitting academy pioneers against an amorphous elite ‘Blob’, comprised of local authority and university-based experts (aka ‘enemies of promise’);
- Technicisation – despite the promise of academy ‘freedoms’, in practice ‘bureaucratic’ requirements grew over time as regulation increased, with technical questions (such as how to set up and grow an academy trust) dominating the time and attention of leaders;
- Cycling – policy flipflops usually occur when values conflicts can no longer be accommodated, when voters ‘punish’ an unpopular government and elect an alternative. In this instance, rather than electoral change, Conservative-led governments encompassed competing value-sets which dominated at different times: an anti-LA and pro-autonomy faction (which also drove Brexit); a managerialist group in favour of central regulation and efficiency; and a traditional ‘one nation’ caucus that sought to conserve the status quo;
- Structural separation – governments often accommodate values conflict by dividing up reality into functional chunks. We argue that the Coalition used this technique within the Department for Education to prioritise an academic educational vision at the expense of wider children’s services and support for vulnerable children.

Much has been written about the leadership of change and reform in education systems but we argue that this literature underplays the importance of policy values and how values-conflict is managed. This paper addresses this gap and highlights some of the challenges this has created for front-line leaders, who have needed to navigate ethical dilemmas while learning to operate in a more centralised, accountable and narrowly academic system, which is also less holistic in its support for vulnerable children.

Parallel Session 5

Locating learning in leadership: articulating Higher Education leadership and management as activity systems of Third Space learning and development

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 298

Dr. Judy Chandler (The Open University)

Navigating turbulence that stems from unexpected reform can require simultaneous learning and leadership, an experience that is easily recognisable in higher higher education. Within this setting, national government policy can drive operational strategy and planning, which tends to be overseen and steered through often multifaceted management and governance structures. When it comes to interpreting and implementing policy, the ideal scenario involves input from a range of stakeholders who possess specific relevant knowledge. In a university this may be academic, professional services and other staff in between, with differing levels of experience and expertise, as was seen in a doctoral study of educational leadership in a distance and online higher education setting. These groups may each have their own culture which may or may not align at times but hold shared interest in meeting university objectives. One means of analysing each group of specialists is to consider their function in terms of activity, thus Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) becomes a useful tool for analysis. One particular iteration of CHAT speaks to learning that occurs at the point of intersection between two activity systems, which is referred to as expansive learning (Engestrom, 2010) and it is in this space that development and reform may also be generated.

This paper discusses how the coming together of different staff groups within higher education is an opportunity for learning and development both in response to and in order to create reform. Based on the premise that individual and organisational development and learning takes place at points of intersection between activity systems, the paper provides an alternative articulation of learning in leadership that is the product of interaction. The paper builds on a doctoral study which drew a correlation between Expansive Learning Theory (Engestrom, 2010) and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994; Whitchurch, 2008) and proceeds to provide a connection to reform. Where leadership is seen as influence, expansive learning can be used to describe Third Space as a leadership space. To do this one should consider Third Space in a broad sense, where two (professional) cultural settings come together and a new hybrid culture is formed. The paper provides examples from a doctoral study and also within the wider sector where Third Space leadership has both responded to and generated reform.

Working-Class Teachers and the issue of “Belonging” in a Middle-Class profession

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 94

Ms. Tracey Smith (The University of Buckingham)

The broader problematic issue that I am seeking to find a solution to is teacher attrition. I am interested in the experiences of teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds and their experiences of belonging within the professional setting of being a working-class teacher. Initially, I was interested in the experience of teachers from working-class backgrounds, based upon my own experience. Jerrim *et al.*, (2024) reports that adults who were eligible for FSM when taking their GCSEs are roughly half as likely to enter teaching as an individual who was not FSM eligible and Worth *et al.* (2022) find minority ethnic groups to be under-represented in the teaching profession. This is potentially important as previous work (Figlio, 2017), has suggested there are likely to be educational advantages to young people when they are taught by a teacher from a similar background to them. Therefore, the research now investigates the experience of those who meet these criteria:

- Working-class backgrounds
- Minority ethnic or “mixed” ethnic backgrounds*
- Intersectionality

*Including Irish gypsy, immigrant and European EAL teachers

What is absent in the literature on retention, is precisely WHO these leaving teachers are; what their background is, their socio-economic status, their levels of social mobility or otherwise. A great deal of time, effort and financial input has been concentrated on reasons WHY teachers leave, but not on WHO these teachers are. Whilst the ECF (Early Career Framework, 2022) was a government-driven strategy to address teacher attrition, there are known factors that influence the need to exit the profession (school environment, accountability and workload (DfE, 2023), but my intention is to find a new answer, because what we currently know is not helping retention. The most recent figures (DfE, 2024) covering 2022/23 show that 39,971 teachers left state-funded teaching for reasons other than retirement, equating to 8.8% of the workforce. In 2022/23, 44% of teachers said they intended to leave teaching compared with 41% in the previous year, suggesting that leaving rates may continue rising. (NFER, 2024).

This research is intended to find a new solution. By investigating the issue through a pragmatic mixed-methods narrative life story study, my aim is that this research can help to ease the retention crisis. In recent years, there has been much interest in the issue of belonging in schools. Hanson and Kraft, (2024), based on responses from over 15,000 teachers in the US, found that there is a link between teacher retention, wellbeing and belonging. Their research looks at career stage and school phase. In addition, Rushton *et al.*, (2023), through an extensive review of the literature, look at the issue of teacher identity in the workplace, finding notable gaps in the research, and Riley *et al.* (2020), look at the issue of belonging in schools from the pupil perspective. Yet gaps in the research remain; the issue of teacher retention being linked to a sense of belonging in the workplace linked to one’s sense of identity and social background has not yet been explored.

Trauma- informed leadership for school change

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 104

Prof. Helen Stokes (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Pauline Thompson (The University of Melbourne)

Many leaders and educators are working in communities that are contending with educational inequity with aims to support students identified as trauma-affected. Students are presenting at school with significant unmet learning and social-emotional needs. This trend has only been exacerbated during COVID-19 with socio-economic inequalities being further entrenched in communities experiencing disadvantage

One direction currently gaining traction in schools is trauma- informed education (TIE). TIE provides a narrative towards practice development that simultaneously addresses increasing complexity within communities (i.e., concerns with increasing youth mental ill health, childhood adversity, behavioural escalation and disruption, disengagement and school refusal; and concerns of staff retention and staff wellbeing) and underpins positive behaviour management while supporting an orderly learning environment.

Trauma-informed education was developed to meet dual concerns within schools for *healing* and *growth* (Brunzell, 2017, 2021). TIE is envisioned as a pedagogical practice model for teaching and learning along with the delivery of academic curriculum. Responding to times of turbulence and acknowledging the need for reform and development, questions then arise as how leaders support teachers to change their practice in the classroom to move their schools from undertaking professional learning in TIE to then implementing, maintaining and growing a positive trauma- informed culture in their schools.

This presentation will draw on longitudinal mixed methods research conducted from 2019-2024 in a secondary school (years 7–12), situated in an outer suburban area of a large metropolitan city. This area is known throughout the region for high levels of intergenerational socio-economic disadvantage and long-standing low levels of educational achievement relative to the state average. After experiencing high teacher turnover, increasing disengagement of students and low staff morale, the leaders at the school acknowledged that alternative instructional and wellbeing approaches were needed to support the unmet needs of students impacted by trauma. In late 2109 all staff at the school began professional development in TIE. Simultaneously the leaders developed practices to embed TI strategies across the school.

Throughout the research, drawing on the Australian professional standard for school leaders, we have identified key leadership practices for implementing trauma-informed strategies. This includes creating an environment of trauma-informed learning and teaching and supporting staff wellbeing. These practices are underpinned by enabling a TI leadership team who facilitate whole school professional development, develop a TI instructional model, developing, maintain a non-punitive behavioural management system and engage parents and the community to understand TI instructional practice and strategies.

A path of change is mapped, using State departmental administered student wellbeing and staff climate surveys, school administered standardised reading tests as well as interviews with leaders, teachers and students. Significant change has occurred in student wellbeing and staff morale and collective teacher efficacy, while academic achievement has improved for the most disadvantaged in the school. The leaders in the school continue to promote equity, diversity and social justice as they move the school and its community from trauma-affected to trauma-informed.

Community Harmony and Educational Success: Ubuntu as a Transformative Leadership Philosophy

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Coleridge) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 263

Dr. Susan Davis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Objective: “It takes a village to raise a child” emphasizes the complexity of addressing the needs of our youth. A holistic leadership approach is essential for effective educational leadership. Educational systems often operate in silos hindering the holistic development of students who learn in diverse contexts throughout their lives. This study illuminates an opportunity to shift towards more robust family, school, and community partnerships (FSCPs) by adopting an Ubuntu-inspired leadership framework. Western models emphasize an individualistic approach, contrasting with Ubuntu, which is grounded in Afrocentric values of interdependence, community harmony, and mutual respect. Ubuntu promotes a more relational, collectivist approach that values community interests over individual gains and employs a more empathetic, reconciliatory, and deep commitment to the common good.

Methods: This research explores the principles of Ubuntu during the implementation of a mindfulness-based program (MBP), specifically Learning 2 BREATHE (L2B), within a behavioral health organization’s collaboration with a local school district in the Western United States. The case study approach focuses on how FSCPs can enhance students’ social and emotional well-being by authentically engaging families and communities in educational innovations.

This study explored how Ubuntu leadership principles are reflected during the implementation of a mindfulness-based program in an educational setting, seeking to identify how these principles manifest and influence the program’s execution. Second, this research explored how Ubuntu-inspired leadership practices emerge and how they support sustainable community engagement in educational innovations.

The data included 14 in-depth, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Various resources, including observations, social media, and print, were integrated to triangulate the data and increase the study’s internal validity. The thematic analysis identified key themes and patterns, with findings situated within Ubuntu-inspired leadership characteristics, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the supportive and challenging aspects of engaging families and communities in the educational process.

Results: Findings suggest that Ubuntu-inspired leadership significantly enhances the implementation of MBPs by fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect among all stakeholders. Engaging families and communities supports educational initiatives and contributes to a more inclusive and supportive implementation process. Ubuntu principles facilitate the negotiation of challenges by prioritizing communal goals and collaborative problem-solving.

The study emphasizes integrating cultural values and community-centric leadership practices into educational systems. Educational leaders can cultivate more effective and lasting community engagement by embracing Ubuntu-inspired leadership principles, strengthening immediate educational outcomes and long-term societal well-being. This research contributes to the scholarly literature on prevention and implementation science, suggesting a shift to a more empathetic and community-focused educational leadership paradigm.

Conclusion: Ubuntu-inspired leadership suggests a promising path toward overcoming the confines of conventional Western educational models. Interconnected and empathetic leaders can significantly enhance the effectiveness of educational innovations and the well-being of communities.

Parallel Session 5

Goal- and action-orientation as key factors during a professional development trajectory for school leaders to facilitate sustainable transfer of training

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 1

Mrs. Els Tanghe (University of Antwerp - Antwerp School of Education), Prof. Wouter Schelfhout (University of Antwerp - Antwerp School of Education), Prof. Tom Smits (University of Antwerp - Antwerp School of Education)

The professional development of school leaders requires quality professional development trajectories (PDT) which take an organizational and didactic approach that encourages concrete transfer and sustainable implementation of the content during and after participation. The organization of and approach taken by PDT determine the perceived effectiveness by school leaders. The concrete transfer and sustainable implementation of the content of a PDT in the work context also pose a challenge. Once a PDT ends, input and support often decline. Although it has been demonstrated that participation in a PDT continues to have an impact years later at the individual level, the implementation of evidence-based programs that are proven effective and contribute to curriculum renewal appears to have little sustainability once initial enthusiasm and financial resources disappear.

Little empirical follow-up research is available on the sustainable impact of such trajectories for school leaders with respect to their own professional development and that of their school. There is even less research on the specific key factors that sustain the effectiveness of PDTs for school leaders after completion. Because it takes time to embed learning outcomes, longitudinal follow-up with different measurements of perceived effects is appropriate for both trainers and organizers but scarce.

This mixed methods study with the collection of quantitative data by an online survey and qualitative data by in-depth interviews with school leaders aimed to address this research gap and gain insight into factors related to the general organization of professional development trajectories. It explores specific approaches linked to participation in a two-year PDT that school leaders perceive as effective for the further goal- and action-oriented transfer and implementation of the content in the context of subsequent professional and school development. The PDT was composed of training days, the start-up and development of professional learning communities and individual coaching. This organizational approach was combined with a specific didactic approach to generate maximum transfer to the participants' schools and concrete actions in terms of vision and school development. The purpose of the training days was to provide the entire group of participants with a theoretical framework, practical examples and applications. The deepening and concretization of this content as a function of transfer to the participants' school context occurred in the PLCs. The permanent PLCs focused on peer learning and social stimulation in smaller groups of existing inter-school networks. The central focus during the individual coaching provided for each participating school was the school's individual level and specific needs or questions. This coaching was not obligatory but warmly encouraged.

The study shows that a professional development trajectory approach that implements working with an action plan, participation in a professional learning community and opportunities for individual coaching, as well as their mutual integration, leads to overall satisfaction and perceived improvement of goal-orientation and action-orientation. Certain factors relating to the overall organization of a professional development trajectory can enhance the sustainable transfer of training. Some additional research insights and recommendations for policy, schools or school communities and organizers are also noted.

How do School Leaders’ Life Experiences Shape and Influence Their Preparation and Development for Leadership Roles in the Ugandan School Context?

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 136

Mrs. Lydia Besisira (University of Nottingham)

It is globally recognised that school Leaders require specialised leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively lead and manage current complex socio-economic and challenging school content. This is vital, especially for Sub-Saharan, specifically Uganda, where school leaders are often appointed on the basis of their teaching experience. The emerging Sub-Saharan empirical studies on leadership development are mainly from a few countries and often focus on formal individualised learning after appointment. Studies, however, suggest that transitioning from being a teacher to becoming a leader is a lifelong, complex process. Leadership learning is not only informed by what happens formally in school. Still, it is also influenced by childhood and adult experiences and interactions with others in local and wider social contexts.

To widen the knowledge base, this study explores and explains how twenty Ugandan secondary school leaders’ life experiences and broader social interactions have shaped and influenced their leadership development and how that enhances or inhibits the enactment of their roles. The following research questions provide the framework for the study to achieve these aims.

1. *What motivates Ugandan secondary school professionals to access leadership positions?*
2. *How do Ugandan secondary school leaders’ different phases of socialisation shape and influence their leadership identity development?*
3. *What formal or informal socialisation processes enhance or inhibit Ugandan secondary school leaders’ leadership learning?*
4. *How, if at all, has Ugandan secondary school leaders’ leadership learning impacted their school leadership practice?*

The study employs a purposive sampling approach to select the school leaders from three types of schools, public, private and faith schools, because of their positionality, and to provide multiple interpretations of the complexities of their lived experiences. An interpretivist hermeneutic phenomenological approach was adopted to provide thick descriptive data from the school leaders’ autobiographical life history grids, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and document analysis detailing the meaning-making, perspectives and actions of their lived experiences. The research explored how the four stages of Career Socialisation theory (anticipatory, personal, professional, and organisational socialisation) influenced participants’ career development and also adopted the theory as a framework for thematic data analysis to respond to the research questions.

The research contributes to the field by providing the participants with the opportunity to reflect on how their lived experiences have cultivated a sense of seeing themselves as leaders. Participants are able to reflect on their acquired professional norms and values in readiness to enact their roles. The leaders also have the opportunity to enhance leadership development processes not only for themselves but also for others in similar schools.

How to make sense of learning? Activities, processes and diversity when school leaders and researchers collaborate

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 157

Dr. Malin Benerdal (Centre for Principal Development, Department of Political Science, Umeå University), Prof. Helene Ärlestig (Centre for Principal Development, Department of Political Science, Umeå University)

Research and practice need to inform each other to create valid and useful knowledge for school development and several initiatives have been launched to strengthen these aspects across different national contexts. In this paper we report on an ongoing partnership between one school organizer and a university unit within a national initiative to strengthen long-term collaboration in Sweden, primarily focusing on a project conducted with two researchers and 15 principals. The partnership has undergone several phases, and within this study the focus was on strengthening principals' pedagogical leadership (i.e. leadership for learning/instructional leadership/educational leadership). The aim of the paper is to explore and discuss how multiple learning intentions and forms for both practitioners and researchers become visible during a combined research and development project.

To do so we draw on research that highlights multiple learning forms and levels that can help us to detect a variation in learning and sensemaking among the participants, which is arguably important especially in leadership positions working in a complex mission. We depart from the idea that to be able to improve schools, principals' and researcher's own reflections and changed behaviour become essential. However, there is a need to further understand how individual and organizational learning appears in combined research and development projects, as previous research has tended to adhere to either or, and seldomly is conducted among school leaders.

Empirically we draw on recorded conversations and discussions as well as notes, and analyses conducted during the process. Our results show that the individual learning content differ among the principals at the same time as the mutual process strengthen the collective understanding and relations in the principal group. For the researchers the process contributed to a deeper understanding regarding the importance of combining generic knowledge with contextual sensemaking. We argue for the need of a more nuanced understanding of different forms of knowledge and individual outputs of participating in a development and research project aiming to foster learning, leadership development as well as school development.

Leadership Support and AI Self-Efficacy: Effects on Teachers’ Attitudes and Intentions to Use AI in Classroom Practices: Evidence from Oman

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Keats) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 40

Dr. Yasser Al-Mahdy (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University), Mrs. Shaima Aljuma (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University), Dr. Fayrouz Elwakil (Tanta University)

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in education presents transformative potential, allowing for enhanced personalization, engagement, and efficiency in teaching. However, successful adoption relies heavily on teachers’ confidence, attitudes, and readiness to utilize AI tools. This study investigates how leadership support influences teachers’ AI self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions to integrate AI into classroom practices in Omani public schools. The research is particularly relevant in Oman, where educational reforms under Vision 2040 emphasize technology integration to improve teaching quality and foster a future-ready education system. Specifically, this study examines the direct and indirect effects of leadership support on teachers’ intentions to adopt AI, exploring AI self-efficacy and attitudes as mediating factors.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design and included a sample of 337 public school teachers from various regions of Oman. Ethical approval was obtained from Oman’s Ministry of Education, and data were collected via emailed surveys. To measure the variables, reliable Likert-scale instruments were utilized. Leadership support was assessed through a scale measuring perceived supervisory support, while AI self-efficacy was evaluated using a short version of AI self-efficacy scale. Teachers’ attitudes toward AI and their intentions to use AI were assessed with brief, validated scales.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis identified several significant relationships among the variables. Leadership support had a positive effect on teachers’ AI self-efficacy, suggesting that supportive school leaders can enhance teachers’ confidence in using AI effectively. In turn, AI self-efficacy positively influenced teachers’ attitudes toward AI, indicating that confident teachers are more likely to perceive AI as a beneficial tool. AI self-efficacy also showed a direct influence on teachers’ intentions to utilize AI in classroom practices, highlighting self-efficacy as a central factor in AI adoption. Moreover, teachers’ attitudes toward AI significantly impacted their intention to use AI, showing that favorable attitudes facilitate technology adoption.

The findings indicate that AI self-efficacy and attitudes serve as mediating pathways between leadership support and teachers’ intention to adopt AI, providing an indirect mechanism through which supportive leadership fosters AI integration in classrooms. These results emphasize the importance of leadership support in creating a positive, confidence-building environment that promotes teachers’ willingness to adopt innovative technologies. In alignment with Oman’s Vision 2040, which prioritizes educational innovation, this study highlights the value of leadership-driven teacher development in AI competencies to sustain effective technology integration. In conclusion, the study offers practical insights into how supportive school leadership can positively shape teachers’ self-efficacy, attitudes, and intentions toward AI use in educational settings. As Oman’s education system advances towards broader AI integration, enhancing leadership support and teacher self-efficacy will be essential for sustainable and effective adoption. By identifying these influential pathways, this research provides valuable implications for educational leadership and AI implementation, supporting Oman’s vision of a future-ready, technologically integrated education system.

Keywords: Leadership Support, AI Self-Efficacy, Teachers’ Attitudes, Intention to Utilize AI, Oman.

Parallel Session 5

Leading for Equity in Crisis: Addressing the Educational Needs of Displaced Women through Inclusive Leadership and Policy Reform

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 15

Mrs. Antonia McGrane (University of Buckingham)

This study critically explores the intersection of gender, migration status, and language learning among displaced refugee and migrant women in England, with a focus on their experiences acquiring English as an Additional Language (EAL). In the face of global displacement and fragmented educational policies, this research highlights the pressing need for educational leadership that promotes equity, diversity, and social justice. The current English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) system in England is inconsistent and inadequate, exacerbating disparities and further marginalising women who already confront significant socio-cultural, educational, and personal challenges.

Using sociocultural and identity theories, the study investigates how intersecting social identities influence these women's language learning journeys and the impact of fragmented policy responses on their integration into society. The findings reveal that the lack of a cohesive national strategy and the turmoil caused by crises such as the conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine have compounded these women's difficulties in accessing effective language education. This has profound implications not only for their individual development but also for broader social cohesion.

The study argues that effective leadership is crucial in transforming policy and practice to meet the needs of displaced communities. It calls for a reformation of educational governance that prioritises inclusive strategies, recognising the diverse backgrounds and experiences of displaced women. Such reforms are essential for fostering an educational environment that supports these learners and facilitates their full participation in society.

This research also emphasises the critical role of educational leaders in times of crisis, as they have the potential to drive policy development and implement supportive learning frameworks. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, leaders can ensure that marginalised groups are not left behind. This work contributes to discussions on leadership effectiveness and the need for adaptive responses in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Aligning with the conference theme of 'Turbulence, Reform and Development in Educational Leadership, Management and Administration', this study provides a timely and significant contribution to the field. It challenges traditional leadership models and calls for a re-evaluation of educational practices and policies to better support marginalised learners, particularly in times of crisis and displacement. As educational systems around the world grapple with increasing diversity and displacement, this research offers valuable insights into how leadership can foster inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education for all.

Gender-Based Grade Differences in Compulsory School – A Study of Principals' Change Work

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 138

Ms. Ida Johansson (Umeå University)

In this paper, I present findings from one of the sub-studies in my ongoing dissertation project, which explores the change work of a group of principals and preschool principals in a small municipality in Sweden, and their ambition to reduce the gender gap in grades in compulsory school. Against the backdrop of the persistent gender gap in grades, long debated in both research and wider society, the principals in the study have initiated a collaboration, supported by municipal civil servants, to increase equality between boys' and girls' grades. All the principals in the study work in the same school district, and the idea of their collaboration is to work together from preschool through the various stages of compulsory school to find common solutions to improve boys' results. Additionally, the dissertation project includes sub-studies that examine the perspectives of teachers and students on grade disparities and the principals' role in the change process.

In the first interview study, presented in this paper, I apply a critical feminist perspective on school leaders' work to reduce the gender gap in grades. Inspired by Carol Bacchi's 'What's the problem represented to be?' theoretical and analytical framework (WPR), a basic assumption in my project is that what you think is causing the gender gap in grades will affect your strategies and measures to counteract it. Hence, the purpose of the study is to investigate different perceptions of the causes of gender-based grade differences and solutions to reduce the gap among principals and civil servants, and to highlight the potential effects these perceptions might have. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What problem representations of gender-based grade differences in compulsory school are found among school principals, preschool principals, and civil servants?
2. What assumptions underlie these problem representations?
3. What discursive, subjectification, and lived effects are produced by these problem representations?

The analysis shows that several different problem representations exist simultaneously among participants interviewed in the study. By analysing underlying assumptions, it was also possible to identify a number of discourses necessary for the problem representations to be comprehensible in the current context. Significant differences were demonstrated between what was said to be most important: changing gender norms, and the actual measures planned: changing teaching practices. This discrepancy risks certain types of measures not being implemented, leaving gender norms unchallenged and teachers lacking the tools to address the issue comprehensively.

The study seeks to advance both theoretical and empirical understanding, contributing to the international discussion on the complex challenges that school leaders face concerning gender-based grade differences. Additionally, the study aims to provide practical insights into the strategies that school leaders use to promote gender equity in student outcomes.

In relation to the conference theme, I highlight the importance of school leaders and principals developing a reflexive approach, especially within the context of reform and change initiatives, and critically examining their assumptions about gender-based grade differences, as well as the solutions they propose.

Play, Joy, Freedom, Compliance – Carnavalesque Leadership in Education

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 52

Dr. Jo Trevenna (None)

From the recognition of play as a form of learning in early years and primary phases to the incorporation of play within curriculum subjects in the secondary phase, playfulness in schools comes in many forms. This paper considers how play and opportunities that constitute a break from the rigid norm of classroom study in later school years can be seen to offer carnivalesque release. The role of folk traditions in schools, with the example of maypole dancing, is considered as a legacy carnivalesque mechanism as are school pantomimes from personal recollection. The dynamic of temporary subversion and reinforcement of hierarchy is explored through compliance models embodied in school uniform and the role of the communal and collectivity reinforced through Carnavalesque Leadership.

Carnavalesque Leadership is a centuries-old leadership strategy. It is efficient and effective. It is so common and so naturalised that it has become almost invisible and it has previously been nameless. Leaders who employ this strategy provide short-term safety-valve release of pressure and tension which prompts greater compliance and builds a stronger sense of belonging. The liminal state created by this temporary release from the norm can achieve longer-term transformation through fostering new relationships and exposing alternatives to dominant patterns of working, living and being.

Introducing children to a model of compliance that will be unconsciously revisited throughout their lives, Carnavalesque Leadership is identifiable in schools across the world. The experience of safety-valve release, the dissolution of the individual into the collective (during a time of developing individuality), the regularity of communal eating and drinking, mask play and parody and, if you are lucky, the social and emotional release of humour and laughter are common and naturalised elements of much school experience. Typifying the early stages of my research into Carnavalesque Leadership and as a huge caveat, this paper is exploratory in its leaping consideration of Carnavalesque Leadership in schools and the generalising links and associations started here require much deeper exploration. The paper is dappled with anecdotal evidence from my own experiences as a pupil, schoolteacher and school leader to punctuate the critical framework extrapolated from the philosophy of Russian thinker, Mikhail Bakhtin.

Positioning, misrecognition and hysteresis: School leader experiences of school 'system' change in England since 2010.

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Shelley) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 232

Dr. Simon Asquith (University of Birmingham)

This presentation details findings from a recently completed doctoral thesis. It explores senior leaders' positioning, misrecognition and hysteresis within the changing school 'system' context in England between 2010 and the present day.

Taking as context the growth of groupings of academy schools and the establishment of teaching school alliances and hubs during this period, the presentation will share insights and findings from research within and across two government regions in England. It details systematically analysed findings in relation to senior leader career stories as recounted through semi-structured interviews with CEOs, Executive Headteachers, Heads of School and Directors of Teaching School. Research took place during an important historical period, as the so called 'self-improving school system' in England was establishing and, for many, was beginning to crystallise.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Pierre Bourdieu and cultural-historical activity theory, as well as from positioning theory, the presentation will present selected findings from the research. These concern how senior leader misrecognition, as problematised by Bourdieu, is a necessity in enabling structural change. The presentation will explore what misrecognition is, how it manifests itself in the career stories of leaders and will argue that it has played an important role supporting such endeavours as school academisation and the growth and development of multi-academy trusts and teaching school hubs.

The presentation will further these arguments by positing that hysteresis, via which the existing habitus of leaders is disrupted by structural changes, has also been inevitable as leaders have found themselves in changed structures and fields. Just as I argue that misrecognition has been an inevitability for individuals, I suggest that it is necessary in enabling equally unavoidable hysteresis, as school leaders adjust to altered educational fields. I conclude that policy makers and enactors rely on misrecognition as an enabler of inevitable hysteresis.

Central to the findings underpinning this presentation is the apparent need for school leaders, just as with other social actors, to sense-make about their own career stories: for them to be able to externalise – and internalise – a career story rationale. As leaders with key roles in enabling expansive transformational change within and across complex organisations, the participants in this research demonstrated typically values-led, contingent approaches to leadership. Themes including public service leader ideals, the exercising of moral intent, equity and social justice were tempered by pragmatic approach and a preparedness to 'get things done' as a response to broader system expectations.

Examples of participant comment and key findings will be shared, and conclusions about how system change relies on paradoxes being assuaged, will be reflected upon. The presentation will provide an argued, reflective account of the mutable and sometimes problematic positioning of senior school leaders at a key point in the development of multi-academy trusts and teaching school groupings at this key period of change in England.

Parallel Session 5

Principalship Recruitment and Retention: Exploring push and pull factors in aspiration to school leadership roles in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 123

Dr. Julie Harvie (University of Glasgow), Mrs. Anna Mai Rooney (Oide), Dr. Mary Nihill (Oide), Ms. Alison Mitchell (University of Glasgow)

This paper explores the research process and early data from the binational *Tipping Points* project, an investigation into factors that support or undermine teachers' aspirations to leadership roles, in Scotland and in the Republic of Ireland.

Rationale

A significant concern in education systems globally, and a longstanding issue in both Ireland and Scotland, is the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced teachers in principal (headteacher) roles. A dominant perception is often of the significant and increasing public challenges of principalship (headship) and the negative impact these challenges have on professional and personal wellbeing, resulting in disengagement and burnout. Further, changes to the principal role, driven by perpetual turbulence and reform with diminishing resources in many systems, have also had an impact on attractiveness of the role, and recruitment and retention. This comparative study across the Scottish and Irish systems considered such perceptions of leadership through investigation into the key career transitions points for teachers considering or following a leadership pathway towards principalship, and the career aspirations of teachers who decide not to seek leadership roles.

Significance to Educational Leadership

The aims of the study were twofold

- to identify challenges experienced by teachers in relation to leadership aspirations and pathways in each system; and
- to identify strategies across both systems to address challenges and to support teachers' aspirations and confidence to undertake leadership roles at different levels in schools.

Methodology

Researchers in each system conducted six **focus groups** (below) following a common research protocol that ensured a structured opportunity for participants to explore complex issues that are central to their role and aspirations, within a safe and supportive environment.

- Primary Teachers
- Primary Middle Leaders
- Primary Deputy Headteachers/Principals
- Post-primary (secondary) Teachers
- Post-primary Middle Leaders
- Post Primary Deputy Principals

Facilitated by the researcher, each focus group discussed four broad areas:

1. Current areas of satisfaction in present role

2. Aspirations to the next leadership role (if any)
3. Facilitating and hindering factors in progress along a leadership pathway
4. Support and development opportunities

This summary of each discussion was prepared and circulated to the respective participants for **sense-checking**; comment and clarification prior to finalisation of each dataset. The data was then **thematically analysed** to produce a framework to report the findings from each system. We then conducted a **cross-analysis** of the Scottish and Irish data to prepare a **comparative report** on the project, setting out recommendations for the development of policy and strategy in relation to leadership development frameworks in each system.

Findings

This paper presents key themes from the Scottish and Irish systems, exploring similarities and divergence between contexts and sectors within each country. Specifically, it highlights push and pull factors in participants’ aspirations to the next level of leadership. It concludes with an urgent call for each system to address the factors that undermine leaders’ aspiration to the next level if we are to address the principalship recruitment and retention crisis prevalent in both systems.

Distributed leadership in Enshi’s (Chinese) primary schools

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Tennyson) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 127

Ms. liu yang (University of Nottingham)

Recognizing a significant gap in the literature on distributed leadership in China, this BELMAS Conference paper will report research that how distributed leadership is enacted in three public primary schools in Enshi City, Hubei Province, China.

Research Aims:

This study has three main aims. First, it seeks to provide a Chinese perspective on distributed leadership, addressing a gap in literature predominantly grounded in Western contexts. Second, it aims to explore how leaders and teachers perceive the operation of distributed leadership within their schools. Finally, the study is to investigate how school leaders collaborate with various stakeholders to either facilitate or impede distributed leadership practices in their schools.

Research Questions:

The research is informed by five research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is distributed leadership enacted in selected Enshi city primary schools?

Distributed leadership can vary significantly in different schools. Investigating the extent of its enactment may capture the depth and breadth of distributed leadership practices, as well as the complexities and nuances in how leadership roles and responsibilities are shared.

RQ2: To whom is leadership distributed in Enshi city primary schools?

This question focuses on who entrusted with leadership roles in their schools, identifying the distribution of responsibilities and tasks across different positions. This question is essential for revealing insights into the power dynamics of distributed leadership practices.

RQ3: What is distributed in Enshi city’s primary schools?

This question seeks to examine the types of responsibilities, tasks, or authorities distributed within the school, delving into what specific elements of leadership are considered shared and collaborative in their schools.

RQ4: What are leaders’ perspectives on distributed leadership in Enshi city primary schools?

This question seeks to explore the views of school formal and informal leaders on distributed leadership. Their insights, offering a top-down perspective, may reveal the intentionality and the dynamic power behind such practices.

RQ5: What are teachers’ perspectives on distributed leadership in Enshi city primary schools?

This question captures teachers’ perspectives on distributed leadership, highlighting practical outcomes and daily impacts. Their insights offer a bottom-up view essential for assessing its efficacy and sustainability.

Methods

This study will use a multiple case-study approach to gather data through semi-structured interviews, observations of Teaching Research Group (TRG) meetings, unstructured field notes, and documentary analysis. The sample includes eleven key stakeholders from each school: the principal, vice-principal, three TRG chairs, and six teachers. Data will be analyzed using a thematic approach.

The rationale for a multiple case-study design lies in the wide variation among schools within the same geographic area, despite potential commonalities. Interviews will focus on distributed leadership aspects, with flexible prompts to capture unexpected insights, while TRG meetings and unstructured field notes will capture real-time practices. Reviewing key documents (e.g., improvement plans, meeting records) will further reveal how distributed leadership is formally integrated within each school.

Findings

The Conference presentation will report the findings from the three case-study schools in Enshi city, China.

These will include the extent of distributed leadership and how it is enacted in each of these contexts.

Parallel Session 5

Reimagining school leadership socialisation in sub-Saharan Africa: A steppingstones metaphor

Saturday, 5th July - 16:55: Parallel Session 5 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 243

Prof. Callie Grant (Rhodes University), Prof. Pontso Moorosi (University of Warwick)

The work of school leadership is a context-sensitive, complex and dynamic process requiring the competencies of leadership and management for the role. In many developing contexts, school leaders are confronted with disquieting turbulence as a consequence of poverty, violence, overcrowded classrooms, unsafe school environments, learner and teacher absenteeism and parental absence on a daily basis. Thus, preparation for school leadership in these contexts is vital and demands contextually relevant and localised knowledge to meet the complex and resource-constrained demands faced. However, a review of the literature on school leadership preparation and development reveals a predominance of research and publications emanating from English-speaking countries in the global North. This literature cannot be transferred unproblematically to non-Western contexts, thus opening up opportunities for significant research, including research on the African continent. Against this backdrop, our paper draws on a three-year, multi-sited study that explored how school leaders were socialised into the principalship role in four sub-Saharan African countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana). Our study was framed by leadership socialisation theory. Principals and deputy principals constituted the participants in our study. In total, 95 school leaders were interviewed across the four countries and we used open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to generate our data. Whilst the stages of the framework (anticipatory, professional, organisational and personal) were useful in the initial stages of our analysis, we came to realise that they proved reductionist in relation to our data. It became clear that by adopting the socialisation stages as an organising framework for our case studies, the findings were presented in a deficit light.

We elected, therefore, to re-analyse our data and present our findings for each case study using a common sequence of overarching ideas or themes; 'Early experiences', 'Schooling', 'Becoming a teacher', 'Becoming a school leader' and 'Consolidating the leadership identity'. This theme set provided a chronological structure for each of the four case studies and assisted us with the cross-case analysis. This opened our thinking and allowed us the conceptual space to reimagine the school leadership socialisation landscape and offer a unique sub-Saharan Africa contribution. This knowledge contribution forms the focus of our paper.

The Complexity of the Work of Leaders in Initial Teacher Education

Saturday, 5th July - 17:10: Parallel Session 5 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 213

Prof. Philip Wood (Nottingham Trent University), Dr. Aimee Quickfall (Leeds Trinity University)

Since 2020, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) sector in England has gone through systemic change, the result of introducing new sector-wide policies. These have focused, predominantly, on a new stringent core content framework (DfE, 2019) and a reaccreditation process for all ITE providers (DfE, 2022), both led by central government, resulting in England having the 'most tightly regulated and centrally controlled system of ITE anywhere in the world' (Ellis and Childs, 2024, p.1). These changes have occurred in addition to the normal work of initial teacher educators which is historically intense.

At the centre of the ITE system are those who co-ordinate and lead provision (for both university and school-based providers of ITE). Their role is as experts in teacher education, but also to develop and maintain relationships between the provider where they are leaders and a range of bodies, including the government (Department of Education), Ofsted (government education regulator), school partners hosting student teacher practicums, student teachers, their staff teams, sector colleagues and senior managers in their own institution. This puts ITE leaders in a position of bridging between a range of professional spaces. Whilst this group of experts is key to the smooth supply of new teachers to the profession, there is almost no research concerning their work and their experiences of this role. To rectify this gap in the research, we explore data from a wider longitudinal study we have been undertaking for the past three years which has captured the reflections of initial teacher educators through annual mixed-methods data collection (Wood and Quickfall, 2024). In relation to the work of ITE leaders we consider:

1. What has been their experience of a period of intense and far reaching change in the ITE system in England?
2. What have been the challenges of being an ITE leader managing these changes?

The results from our research suggest a group of experienced individuals who are required to lead complex programmes with many partners whilst having to react and engage with changes both internal and external to their organisations. The reaccreditation process which all ITE providers have had to go through over the past three years, together with the introduction of the core content framework and the pressures of Ofsted have all presented challenges leaders have had to engage with and overcome. This has led to high workloads and stressful work. However, in contrast, they are very positive about the professionalism and dedication of their teams and work with student teachers from which they gain a great deal of professional satisfaction. We also consider future foci for research concerning this under researched group of leaders.

Navigating the Storm: Enhancing Leader’s Preparedness for Crisis Management in Education

Saturday, 5th July - 17:25: Parallel Session 5 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 22

Dr. Susan H. Shapiro (Touro Graduate School of Education)

The increasing frequency and severity of crises within the educational landscape have underscored the urgent need for educational leaders to be equipped with effective crisis management skills. From natural disasters and school violence, to global conflicts and societal challenges, schools are facing unprecedented disruptions. This proposal seeks to propose strategies for enhancing educators’ capacity to navigate these challenging situations by integrating the Educational Crisis Framework into educational leadership preparation programs. The aim is to equip new educational leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to proactively address crises, rather than reactively manage them. I will examine the integration of crisis management concepts into existing coursework and explore the challenges and their limitations.

This research aims to contribute to the development of more effective crisis management training programs. Ultimately, the goal is to empower teachers and educational leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to safeguard the well-being of students and staff during times of crisis.

Research Questions:

1. What are the components of effective crisis management training for educators and what is the impact on educational leadership?

Theoretical Framework:

The escalating frequency and severity of crises impacting educational settings, necessitate a heightened state of preparedness among educational leaders and teachers.. By integrating the Education Crisis Framework (ECF), this study aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how school leaders and educators can effectively respond to and recover from crises.

The ECF, with its emphasis on ethical, compassionate, and community-based decision-making, provides a valuable lens for examining crisis response and preparedness. The framework’s action-oriented “Aviate, Communicate, Navigate” model offers a practical guide for immediate crisis response, while the reflective model, encompassing knowledge, expertise, and compassion for self and community, facilitates post-crisis reflection and planning.

This study aims to contribute to the development of more effective crisis management training programs. Ultimately, the goal is to empower educational leaders and teachers with the knowledge, skills, and ethical frameworks needed to navigate crises with compassion and resilience.

Significance for Educational Practice, Policy, and Theory:

The findings of this research have the potential to inform the development of more effective training programs by implementing targeted professional development initiatives. Additionally, the research will contribute to the theoretical understanding of crisis management within the educational context, providing valuable insights for future studies.

Leadership Preparation in Korean Educational Leadership Management and Administration (KELMAS) context: comparing two pathways to become a headteacher in Secondary School.

Saturday, 5th July - 17:40: Parallel Session 5 (Wordsworth) - Theatre - Abstract ID: 297

Dr. Yoonjeong Lee (University of Leicester)

This study examines the educational leadership preparation of aspiring headteachers in secondary schools in Korea. Becoming a headteacher in Korea typically takes approximately thirty years, meaning most aspiring headteachers reach the role near retirement age. This extended preparation process results from hierarchical promotion structures, performance evaluations, professional development requirements, education policies, cultural expectations, and expertise demands in school leadership. While this process allows aspiring headteachers to develop extensive experience, it may also present challenges in leadership adaptability and succession planning.

Effective leadership preparation extends beyond meeting promotion requirements; it necessitates developing holistic leaders who positively impact the school community. Experience, knowledge, character, and a commitment to lifelong learning are critical to success in this role.

The Korean education system is centralised, and education policy strictly regulates headteacher promotion and appointment. Due to the high popularity of headship positions, these regulations are in place to prevent or minimise potential conflicts. The education system actively works to maintain standardisation across schools, align leadership with national educational goals, and uphold accountability, transparency, and professional standards. Aspiring headteachers follow two main pathways: a school-only pathway and a mixed pathway that includes roles in both schools and the Office of Education.

This study investigates the features of leadership preparation in these two pathways and their influence on first-year headteacher practice. Using semi-structured interviews and shadowing with twenty-two headteachers, it examines how different preparation routes shape their ability to raise their voice, engage with education policy, and lead schools effectively.

Workshop / Roundtable

Exploring Faculty Learning Communities in Canada and the UK: Bridging Professional Development and Student Engagement

Sunday, 6th July - 10:00: Workshop / Roundtable (Shelley) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 238

Dr. Amy Lean MacArthur (Crandall University), Dr. Nancy Matthews (Crandall University)

Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) in higher education are not a new concept; however, there is limited research on FLCs in higher education in Canada and the UK and the outcome for students. That said, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are well documented as tenets within K-12 settings where studies have shown positive effects on teacher collaboration, professional development, and student achievement based on principles of collaborative learning, shared leadership, continuous improvement, reflective practice, and student-centeredness. In comparison, FLCs focus on building faculty communities, and developing scholarly practice of teaching and learning. The pursued outcomes of PLCs are also beneficial at the higher education level where student engagement is key, noting that engagement is holistic including academic success, well-being, and persistence in education.

Therefore, this case study examines the potential of FLCs to strengthen faculty professional development and collaboration and to foster student engagement, academic achievement, mentorship, and retention on university campuses in Canada and the UK. The following research questions will be addressed: 1) How do FLCs exist in higher education and how do they differ in their formation, structure, and sustainability between Canadian and UK universities? 2) How do FLCs influence faculty members' professional development and pedagogical practices? and 3) How do participation and engagement in FLCs influence student well-being, academic achievement, mentorship, and retention?

Two recent research studies will be built upon, drawing from a framework for decision-making and implementation (author 1, 2019) and a framework of engagement (author 2, 2023). The first was a qualitative study that produced a grounded theory in decision-making processes for educational leaders. Research was conducted within a public education system through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The study revealed themes of: a) collaboration and communication, b) knowledge and skill, and c) balance of autonomy, accountability, and direction. The second produced a case study on first-year student engagement. Research was conducted at a private liberal arts university through interviews with faculty and staff and surveys conducted with first-year students. The case study revealed: a) there was a desire from all players (students, faculty, and staff) for structured objectives, teaching, mentoring, advisement, and assessment; b) that a focus on holistic health is important for student engagement, and c) there needs to be an emphasis on individual student development through increased expectations, service, the identification of a calling, and career preparation.

Further study in higher education across different national contexts can help fill this gap in the literature and provide a comprehensive and comparative understanding of FLCs and help identify the key factors that enable or constrain their effectiveness and impact. A goal of this study is to create a diagnostic tool that faculty can implement on their campuses to assess their current practices and develop effective faculty learning communities for faculty professional development and student engagement.

Workshop / Roundtable

Pathways to Headship in state-funded schools in England: Barriers and enablers to equitable representation of ethnicity at Headship

Sunday, 6th July - 10:00: Workshop / Roundtable (Noblesse) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 144

Mr. Kausor Amin-Ali (University of Birmingham)

Headship in state-funded schools in England is underrepresented in BAME ethnicity. The most recent data from 2023-24 Schools' Workforce Census shows only 937 out of 22,520 headteachers in England were declared as BAME ethnicities (DfE, 2024a). This is 4.2% of all headships. This is compared to 9.1% of the schools' workforce (ibid., 2024a) who are BAME teachers. Looking back earlier in the pipeline, 27.2% of all Initial Teacher Training (ITT) applicants were BAME students (DfE, 2024b).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate pathways to headship in England and to reflect on the journey to headship. This study will answer two key questions. What are the possible barriers preventing a more equitable representation by ethnicity in headship in England? Conversely, to consider what are the possible enablers to ensure a more equitable representation?

The theoretical framework considered is through the lens of Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefanovic, 2001) and an epistemological consideration of pragmatism (Peirce, 1878). Consequently, a mixed methods study was carried out (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2017; Creswell and Plano Clark 2018; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2009; Robson and McCartan, 2016) using a concurrent design. This was composed of a survey questionnaire was sent to all headteachers in state-funded schools in the academic year 2022-23 with 599 responses obtained. In parallel, twenty-one semi-structured interviews with participating headteachers from a range of contexts and settings including large secondary schools, small primary schools, in regions across England, with male and female headteachers from White backgrounds but also a few BAME headteacher participants.

The preliminary findings show that barriers may reflect some of those found in previous studies, such as racism through to bias and peer support in favour of preserving the status quo of a disproportionately higher number of white Headteachers and thus hindering the pathway to headship and career progression for aspiring BAME headteachers.

The reflective discourse with headteachers has provided invaluable insight into ways to consider and policy implications and specific interventions to facilitate improved representation. The expected beneficiaries from this study include, but not limited to, BAME aspiring headteachers; BAME and White headteachers; Governing Board and Human Resources in the sector. This study will add to the existing research and literature by providing a more recent data study but also looking at the focus of pathways to headship, rather than towards school senior leadership in general. Furthermore, a policy change consideration of applicant success rates by ethnicity by school organisation. Further studies could be considered on the graduate entry to teaching by higher educational institutions and entry to the teaching profession as a pathway to teaching study.

Workshop / Roundtable

Exploring how embodied collaging supports the meaning-making of learning and leadership in schools

Sunday, 6th July - 10:00: Workshop / Roundtable (Coleridge) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 271

Ms. Stephanie Hill (University of Cambridge), Dr. Suzanne Culshaw (University of Hertfordshire)

Global events over the past few years have provided a visceral account of how rapidly, and at times, erratically, our world is changing. The increasingly volatile and unpredictable nature of education has been both thought-provoking and incredibly destabilising for educators, researchers, and the young people whom they serve. This brings with it an opportunity for researchers and researching practitioners to provide processes and tools to support educators in navigating this complexity and ultimately, in transforming school organisations and systems that no longer serve our young people.

This workshop invites participants to consider ways in which we can create safe-enough and meaningful physical and metaphorical spaces where students, teachers and school leaders can reflect upon their lived experiences within schools. Informed by complexity theory and anti-oppressive research approaches that consider issues of representation and voice within the power/knowledge nexus and recognise that meaning making is dynamic, interactive and collective, and drawing on two empirical studies conducted across Europe and the UAE, the authors make a case for positioning arts-based and embodied approaches alongside more conventional methods of learning, reflection and research in education.

The first study, a European project (ENABLES), explored innovative ways of using arts-based and embodied methods of collaborative and distributed leadership development. The second study employed collage-making and dialogue protocols to enable a space where students and teachers co-generated insights into the mechanisms that drive learning in their own school organisation. Both studies found that collage-creation can support the development of affective attributes, aesthetic awareness and habits of aesthetic reflexivity. Individuals engaged in the visual rather than the linguistic, which gave them the opportunity to modify and develop their thinking as they moved objects around and added to their collage. This slowing down of meaning-making occasioned a deep reflection that led to notable changes in understanding and practice.

Through interactive and provocative activities, the workshop offers participants a glimpse into the ways in which arts-based and embodied approaches to meaning-making and reflection, such as collage, facilitate new ways of 'seeing', and thinking about, learning and leadership within schools.

Workshop / Roundtable

Developing Self-Leadership for Success: It starts with you

Sunday, 6th July - 10:00: Workshop / Roundtable (Keats) - Workshop/Roundtable - Abstract ID: 124

Dr. Lewis Fogarty (Brunel University London)

In this workshop individuals will be challenged to reflect on their self-leadership skills and how these are exhibited when working with others, both colleagues and students. Self-leadership is a term introduced to academic literature over 30 years ago (Manz & Sims, 1980) and around this time Manz (1986) stated that even though behaviour is often supported by external forces, actions are ultimately controlled by internal, not external, forces. More recently Neck, Manz and Houghton (2019) defined self-leadership as a self-influence process by which people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to perform.

Explorations around this literature alongside personal development literature, such as Clear (2018) as well as personal experiences in educational leadership, has led the author to create a Table of Elements for Excellent Self-Leadership. This table groups elements into five groups: Powerful Mindset, Resourceful, Courageous, Impactful and Responsive. These groups, and the elements within them, will be the focus of this workshop. More specifically, elements such as being time sensitive, making conscious connections and finding comfort in discomfort will be explored and discussed in detail.

There are many positives to developing self-leadership, including having a clear sense of purpose and living a more fulfilling and impactful life where you work more effectively with others, which is vital in education professions. The importance of emotional intelligence is well documented in helping professionals like education, for example, East (2019) and in relation to this Rauthmann and Sachse (2011) reported that self-leadership is a process for improving socio-emotional intelligence, in that awareness and regulation of one's emotional state is better enhanced by a person who takes accountability of their thoughts and behaviours. Educational organisations that can promote this with their educators and students will be more likely to have positive culture of growth for all. Ultimately, as suggested by Prapavessis, MacNamara, and Doherty (2021) developing self-leadership will lead to developing specific behavioural and cognitive strategies designed to influence personal effectiveness positively, this is what the author strives for with this workshop.

If individuals can be resourceful by being aware of the importance of time and the relationships they form, as well as having an eye for impact, and own their choices with courage, they will be much more likely to work effectively with others and within educational organisations. At an organisation level this can have many benefits for culture and outcomes and likewise, on a personal level it can lead to meaningful development and a more fulfilling life.

**Symposium - Educational
Leadership Preparation
and Development: An
International and Future
Focused Perspective**

Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective

Sunday, 6th July - 11:15: Symposium - Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 114

Dr. Berni Moreno (The University of Melbourne), Prof. David Gurr (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Peng Liu (University of Manitoba), Dr. Helen Goode (The University of Melbourne), Dr. Lawrie Drysdale (The University of Melbourne)

Theme 1 A future-focused approach to the preparation and development of teacher and middle leaders

This paper/presentation is part of a symposium focused on the future direction of educational leadership preparation and development based on a forthcoming book by the International School Leadership Development Network. The book has four sections; this paper/presentation features the section on a *future-focused approach to the preparation and development of teacher and middle leaders*, with contributions from authors of the two chapters.

Often, we refer to educational or school “leaders,” when in fact the research is focussed on school principals or their equivalent. For example, the 2024/5 UNESCO GEM report was about leadership in education; despite acknowledging many times that leadership from many was needed and devoting one of eighteen chapters to shared leadership, when the authors conceptualised leadership at the school level, the division was simply between “principals” and “others” (vice principals, teachers, parents, students, and communities), and most of the research evidence related to principals. This paper/presentation focuses on some of the “others”—a chapter on teacher preparation (Paper A) and another on teacher and middle leaders (Paper B).

Both chapters discuss the critical need for leadership development in education, emphasising the evolving demands and challenges faced by educational leaders. Examining the findings uncovers several key patterns that offer important insights into the future of educational leadership preparation and development and guide the formulation of policy and practice for schools, school leaders, and systems.

Importance of Teacher and Middle Leadership: Both chapters highlight the growing importance of teacher and middle leadership within schools. Chapter B emphasises that teacher and middle leadership roles are gaining traction globally due to their influence on professional practice, collaboration, and school improvement. Similarly, the authors of Chapter A point out the necessity for preservice teachers in Canada to develop leadership competencies early in their careers to navigate the dynamic educational landscape.

Challenges in Education: Both articles identify significant challenges facing the education sector. Chapter A mentions changes in community and school demographics, societal transformations, increased accountability, and evolving expectations. Chapter B discusses the global increase in teacher stress and work intensification, leading to teacher shortages. These challenges necessitate robust leadership to guide schools through periods of uncertainty and change.

Need for Comprehensive Leadership Preparation: There is a consensus that effective leadership preparation is crucial. Chapter A argues for embedding leadership learning within initial teacher education curricula in Canada, while Paper B proposes a future-focused approach to leadership development that equips leaders with skills to manage a rapidly changing educational environment.

Global and Local Perspectives: Both articles recognize the need to address both local and international educational challenges. Chapter A focuses on the Canadian context but acknowledges global influences such as demographic shifts and technological advancements. Chapter B provides a global overview and uses Australia as a case study to illustrate broader trends and implications for leadership development.

Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective

Sunday, 6th July - 11:35: Symposium - Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 115

Dr. Ian Potter (University Huddersfield), *Dr. Cristina Moral-Santaella* (University of Granada), *Prof. BPatricia Silva García* (University Barcelona), *Dr. Serafin Antúnez* (University Barcelona), *Dr. Charles Slater* (California State University Long Beach)

Theme 2 Leadership preparation for equity, inclusion, and social justice

This paper/presentation is part of a symposium focused on the future direction of educational leadership preparation and development based on a forthcoming book by the International School Leadership Development Network. The book has four sections; this paper/presentation features the section on leadership preparation for equity, inclusion, and social justice, with contributions from authors of three of the four chapters.

The paper/presentation is part of the history of ISLDN researchers’ exploration of social justice leadership. At the beginning of the ISLDN, researchers exploring social justice leadership in schools developed a conceptual model to identify the interplay between the micro, meso, and macro levels of social justice leadership. The research explored eight country contexts and reported findings in more than 30 publications, including edited books and special issues of journals. It was shown that principals had a strong sense of personal identity shaped by their values, education, and life experiences. The guiding values of the principals covered the areas of social, personal, and professional values. They had a strong sense of mission and moral purpose. For these leaders, social justice went beyond rhetoric. They took an active stance by recognizing injustice among groups, acquiring necessary resources, redistributing resources, and providing opportunities for the marginalised. In terms of their qualities, they were proactive rather than reactive, highly visible in their schools, and acted as role models. The chapters delve into various dimensions of leadership preparation and development for equity, inclusion, and social justice in educational settings. Despite their different focal points, certain patterns and themes emerge that provide a comprehensive understanding of the key factors influencing educational leadership for social justice.

Fostering important leadership skills: Chapter A suggests creating a “Portrait of an Administrator” outlining the skills and competencies needed to promote inclusive learning experiences, including the skills and resources to effectively use technology to advance social justice in education. Chapter B encourages the development of an optimistic, resilient, and emotionally intelligent leadership mindset.

Building adult ego and critical self-reflection: Chapter C discusses the necessity for principals to reach at least the individualistic stage of adult ego development to be effective leaders for inclusion and social justice. Additionally, leaders must be aware of their dispositions and continuously strive for growth. Similarly, Chapter B underscores the significance of critical self-reflection activities to develop leaders for social justice.

Collaborating within and beyond the school community: Building networks and strategic partnerships is seen as vital for long-term success. For example, Chapter D stresses the importance of building networks with other schools and local support services to promote collaboration and shared resources. Chapter A calls for collaborating with community organisations to monitor and enhance the depth and breadth of digital inclusion in the school system.

Developing good leadership preparation programs: Chapter D suggests developing leadership preparation programs that focus on socio-educational reality and networking with internal and external agents. Chapter B emphasises developing a meaningful and sound teaching–learning program aimed at social justice and sustainable development.

Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective

Sunday, 6th July - 11:55: Symposium - Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 116

Dr. Suzy Hardie (University of South Carolina), Ms. Alison Mitchell (University of Glasgow)

Theme 3 School, community, and university partnerships for leadership preparation and development

This paper/presentation is part of a symposium focused on the future direction of educational leadership preparation and development based on a forthcoming book by the International School Leadership Development Network. The book has four sections; this paper/presentation features the section on school, community, and university partnerships for leadership preparation and development with contributions from the authors of two of the three chapters.

Educational leadership that focuses on internal and external networks is likely to be more effective and lead to greater organisational success. Networks and networking are part of the suite of practices shown to have a positive impact on leadership development, and there have been calls for more research on network-enhanced leadership development. The three chapters in this section of the book reveal several patterns in this area of research that are crucial for understanding the current landscape and future directions of educational leadership preparation and development.

The Power of Partnerships: The power of partnerships in leadership preparation is underscored by all the chapters. Chapter A argues that school–university partnerships serve as laboratories for educational experimentation. These partnerships are essential for developing effective and responsive leadership preparation programs, as they facilitate innovative approaches and practical insights. Chapter B builds on this by illustrating how Research–Practice Partnerships (RPPs) contribute to high-quality, sustainable professional learning opportunities. RPPs not only support ongoing development but also ensure that learning is deeply integrated with real-world challenges and solutions. Chapter C complements these views by highlighting the positive impact of university/district partnerships. Together, these studies illustrate those partnerships between schools and universities, as well as broader RPPs, are crucial for creating dynamic and effective leadership preparation programs.

Bridging Theory and Practice: Chapter A emphasises the need for authentic, field-based learning opportunities to effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice in leadership preparation. The authors argue that such experiences are crucial for preparing leaders to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Chapter B supports this view by highlighting the role of RPPs in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. RPPs are instrumental in connecting theoretical knowledge with practical application, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of leadership preparation.

Addressing Unique Challenges: To address the unique challenges faced by rural and high-poverty schools, Chapter A emphasises the importance of developing leadership skills specifically tailored to these settings. The authors argue that RPPs are essential for enhancing the capacity of school leaders to tackle complex issues unique to these environments. RPPs facilitate data-driven continuous improvement practices and promote collaboration between educators and researchers, thereby supporting effective problem-solving in challenging contexts. In addition, Chapter C highlights the necessity of political acuity in leadership preparation. Political acuity is crucial for effective leadership. Successful programs must consider the contextual factors that influence the practical application of critical leadership praxis. By integrating political acuity into leadership development, programs can better prepare leaders to address the specific challenges and opportunities they encounter in real-world educational settings.

Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective

Sunday, 6th July - 12:15: Symposium - Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 117

Prof. Pamela Angelle (The University of Tennessee), Dr. Karen Bryant (University Georgia), Dr. Julie Harvie (University of glasgow), Dr. Sylvia Robertson (University Otago), Dr. Michele Morrison (University Waikato), Dr. Nathern Okilwa (Baylor University)

Theme 4 Leadership training programs for future leadership development

The paper/presentation is part of a symposium focused on the future direction of educational leadership preparation and development based on a forthcoming book by the International School Leadership Development Network. The book has four sections; this paper/presentation features the section on leadership training programs for future leadership development with contributions from the authors of five of the seven chapters.

In this section, all the chapters focus on describing approaches to future leadership development; one observation is that leadership training programs across different contexts reveal a variety of approaches aimed at equipping future leaders with the necessary skills to address the evolving challenges in educational environments. Some of the key findings include the following.

Culturally Sustaining Leadership: Leadership training should equip leaders with the skills to sustain and promote cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity within schools. According to Paper A, culturally sustaining leadership extends beyond mere cultural competence. It involves actively promoting and integrating diversity into the educational environment. In a similar vein, Paper E highlights the critical role of leadership in addressing students' diverse cultural backgrounds, especially during challenging periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continuous Improvement and Reflective Practice: Leadership programs need to adopt continuous improvement strategies and encourage reflective practice. Paper B advocates for the incorporation of action research into education doctoral programs, noting that it supports continuous quality improvement by promoting critical reflection and active stakeholder engagement. Similarly, Paper E stresses the importance of reflective practice, particularly among middle leaders during the pandemic.

Innovative and Interdisciplinary Approaches: Preparing leaders to address the complexities of modern educational environments requires adopting innovative and interdisciplinary approaches. This involves integrating diverse fields and creative problem-solving strategies into leadership training. For example, Paper G calls for disrupting traditional leadership preparation models by incorporating interdisciplinary programs, micro-credential courses, and innovative practices. Paper F emphasises the importance of a longitudinal and comprehensive approach to leadership development that spans an entire career, integrating diverse content and learning experiences.

Democratic and Ethical Leadership: Developing democratic and ethical leadership capabilities is essential for preparing leaders to address complex cultural and ethical issues. Paper D stresses the importance of training programs that equip principals to manage cultural and ethical challenges and to advance democratic values within the school community. Similarly, Paper A highlights the ethical dimensions of culturally sustaining leadership, emphasising the need for leaders to actively promote equity and inclusion.

Well-Being and Relational Aspects of Leadership: Leadership programs must prioritise both the well-being and relational aspects of leadership. For instance, Paper E underscores the significance of teamwork, staff well-being, and overcoming barriers to leadership roles, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Paper C reflects on the necessity of developing a strong leadership identity and critical literacy among aspiring leaders, with a focus on relational dynamics and personal well-being.

Rejuvenating School Leadership Preparation and Development: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Sunday, 6th July - 12:35: Symposium - Educational Leadership Preparation and Development: An International and Future Focused Perspective (Noblesse) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 254

Dr. Nathern Okilwa (Baylor University), Dr. Bruce Barnett (University of Texas at San Antonio), Dr. Susan Cleveland (Northside Independent School District)

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the educational systems around the world and further exposed and magnified the gaps within the systems. The recovery is ongoing. Emerging evidence indicates that educational systems as well as school leaders were ill-prepared for the magnitude of disruption of the COVID-19 crisis. In recognizing the pivotal role of school leaders then (during the pandemic) and now (recovery process), the purpose of this chapter is to reimagine new ways of preparing and developing school leaders that are equipped to meet the complex demands and ever-expanding scope of their jobs. Consequently, this chapter proposes a future-oriented longitudinal partnership model for preparing and developing school leaders and researching its impact on school leaders’ practices, teacher effectiveness, and student learning outcomes.

**Symposium - Balancing
the Self and the System:
Personal Journeys and
Collective Goals in
Educational Leadership
in Malta**

Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta. - Leadership and Women: the Space between Us. Narrating ‘my-self’ and telling the stories of senior female educational leaders in Malta.

Sunday, 6th July - 11:15: Symposium - Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 147

Dr. Robert Vella (MSEAM)

This qualitative research study explored the perceptions and experiences of senior female educational leaders in the Department of Education in Malta. Although Malta’s laws relating to gender equity are in line with those of the EU, traditional beliefs and values, including those influenced by the Catholic church, mean that in many areas of social life, women and girls continue to be perceived to be inferior. It is also the case that the gender gap in Malta in many sectors is one of the highest in Europe.

The study was framed within the constructivist and interpretivist paradigm and took a narrative approach. I have looked at gender and leadership through a lens of social justice rather than feminism. Data were analysed manually using a hybrid approach method to decide on the relevant themes. An autoethnographic approach was also employed, whereby I critically examined and reflected on my experiences of female leaders.

The findings from the study demonstrated that women in educational leadership in Malta have to face challenges specific to them being females. The study recommends among other things, real family-friendly measures by organisations; organised professional development programmes for women in leadership and for those aspiring to be leaders; and training programmes focused on how to build healthy collegial relationships.

Distributed Leadership Towards Whole-School Curricular Reform in a Maltese Independent School

Sunday, 6th July - 11:30: Symposium - Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 192

Mr. Heathcliff Schembri (Malta Society of Educational Administration and Management (MSEAM)), Ms. Bernadette Stivala
(Malta Society of Educational Administration and Management (MSEAM))

Symposium - Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta

This paper examines a curriculum reform project implemented in the Early Years (3-7 years) and Junior (8-10 years) sectors of an independent school in Malta. Reflecting the conference theme of experiencing turbulence and reform in education, the initiative sought to integrate a child-centred, emergent curriculum approach while addressing national learning outcomes. It evolved into a project-based learning model for older students, fostering interdisciplinary connections and real-world problem-solving skills.

The reform journey underscores the symposium's theme of balancing personal and collective leadership. Mixed-methods tools, including questionnaires, SWOT analysis, and Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions, as well as interactive parent workshops, were employed to critically examine challenges and co-construct solutions. Initially, individual resistance among educators highlighted the tension between established norms and innovative practices. Through distributed leadership and collaborative strategies, school leadership cultivated a shared vision and collective ownership of pedagogical transformation.

Findings reveal the links between individual agency and collective action in reform efforts. By aligning diverse stakeholder perspectives - teachers, parents, and school leaders - the project bridged resistance and fostered a cohesive educational approach. This research illustrates how collaborative leadership practices, underpinned by robust methodological frameworks, can mitigate turbulence, drive sustainable reform, and enhance systemic development in educational settings.

Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta - Leading leaders: Discourse analysis of a speech for Heads of Schools

Sunday, 6th July - 11:45: Symposium - Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 242

Dr. Angele Pulis (Institute for Education)

This study examined how, during a speech, the spoken word of a leader was communicated and how it was appraised by the audience. Through a case study, the research examined a speech delivered by a leader to other leaders. A Head of College Network, who is the Heads of Schools’ superior next-in-line manager, addressed a group of Heads of Schools. The aim of the study was to find out how the content and the delivery of the speech were planned and executed by the orator and, in turn, how the speech was received and interpreted by the audience. The research process was conceived and developed under the theoretical framework of hermeneutics. The research methodology was discourse analysis and it conflated Speech Acts Theory and Aristotelian Appeals. The perspectives of the Head of College Network and the Heads of Schools were examined and contrasted. The findings showed that the appeals to pathos - to emotions- during the speech, brought about the strongest reactions in the participants. The integrated outcomes emanating from the study were utilised to formulate recommendations for educational leaders, to facilitate more efficacious speeches.

SYMPOSIUM Balancing the Self and the System; Turning the Tide: Reimagining democratic leadership through cooperative governance in Maltese schools.

Sunday, 6th July - 12:00: Symposium - Balancing the Self and the System: Personal Journeys and Collective Goals in Educational Leadership in Malta (Coleridge) - Symposium - Abstract ID: 248

Mr. Mario Mallia (Institute for Education)

Cooperative schools have managed to flourish by pushing themselves through windows of opportunity that arose, at times inadvertently. In the UK, neoliberal policies that sought to dissolve the link between schools and local authorities opened the door for cooperative schools. In the Basque region, cooperative schools put their foot in the closing door as the Franco dictatorship sought to reinforce a nationalist agenda. This paper will make the point, with a specific focus on the Maltese context, that cooperative schools should not merely come about as if sneaking through a window left unwittingly ajar, but through a conscious and concerted effort by educational leaders to envision and make space for broader ownership and democracy in schools, particularly in the state and state-financed sectors.

By and large, educators in Malta remain far removed from school governance, which remains largely subservient to a top-down approach. The definition of participation and democracy in governance is limited to policy consultation, leaving issues related to ownership, 'togetherness', fragmentation, democratic organisation of labour, and the consequent potential for a counter-narrative in education relatively untouched.

However, there may be opportunities worth exploring. The National Education Strategy for 2024-30, recently published, establishes Wellbeing, Growth and Empowerment, together with Equity and Inclusion as its main pillars. The Cooperatives Societies Act is being reviewed. The state-financed church school sector is currently grappling with a critical moment as it reflects upon a sharp decline in the number of religious who lead the schools and its consequences on governance, including the inevitable inclusion of the laity. More broadly, the European Union of which Malta is a member, is calling for a 'new push' on European Democracy, even if possibly conditioned by a move to the political Right.

This paper will make the case that this historical juncture, provides a critical moment for Maltese educators to claim stronger control over their work through cooperative models of governance in schools. It will critically explore the windows of opportunity in different educational sectors and suggest where traction is most possible and desirable. It will also make the case for networking with cooperative schools elsewhere, the need for a systematic look at teacher training, and the use of EU instruments that connect people and institutions to intrigue and enlighten. It will be argued that such a push has the potential to develop cooperative schooling not as a mere afterthought but as a tangible and desirable avenue of democratic leadership and educational possibility.

Poster Presentations

Positioning International Baccalaureate within Kazakhstan’s Centralized Schooling Field: A Contextual and Structural Analysis

Sunday, 6th July - 11:15: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 56

Ms. Mirangul Mashtakova (The University of Manchester)

This paper aligns with the Governance and Policy strand by providing a contextual and structural analysis of Kazakhstan’s schooling field and the policy implications for the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Based on a review of current literature and policy documents, this paper shows how national policies position IB schools within Kazakhstan’s centralized education system, highlighting the complex conditions in which IB programs operate.

Contextually, the Kazakhstani schooling field is situated within recent reforms that aim to improve educational quality and align it with international standards. These reforms have involved changes in curriculum, assessment systems, teaching approaches, teacher appraisal system, and the introduction of per capita funding for schools.

Structurally, the Kazakhstani schooling field remains highly centralized, with government structures holding significant power over how schools operate. All types of schools are required to comply with the State Compulsory Educational Standard, which prescribes the content, curriculum, teaching load, and teaching methods across different educational levels.

In terms of IB programs, policy analysis reveals that while IB programs are legally allowed for all types of schools, only schools with autonomous and international status have a greater autonomy to enact IB, while other types of schools (public and private) have to do it within the boundaries of the State Compulsory Educational Standard which challenge them to integrate both IB and state-mandated requirements. Additionally, the government allows private schools that enact IB programs to charge higher tuition fees compared to other private schools, positioning IB as a distinct, exclusive alternative within the schooling field.

This paper argues that these policies restrict IB access primarily to private and schools with special status, marginalizing public schools that enact IB. Consequently, IB is positioned as an elitist program, reinforcing educational inequities.

Problematizing Educational Policy in the Arab Context: Challenges and Implications

Sunday, 6th July - 11:23: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 126

Mrs. Rayan Katerji (American University of Beirut (AUB) & University of Glasgow)

This poster examines the complexities and challenges associated with educational policy in the Arab region, a turbulent landscape marked by ambiguity and insufficient research. It is based on an ongoing larger and more comprehensive study being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation that employs an interpretivist qualitative research approach utilizing interviews and policy analysis to develop a contextualized understanding of policy advocacy process in four Arab countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, and Oman. The focus of this poster, however, will be on the preliminary policy analysis conducted to analyze the nature of educational policies in these countries which helps comprehend the contextual setting for my larger study. Although covering four countries may initially seem extensive, the nature of educational policies and the relatively limited volume of educational policy documents in these countries render this approach feasible. Despite variations in structure and content of these policies, they often share common characteristics. Influenced by historical, social, and political contexts, many educational policies experience turbulence due to ongoing political instability. They are also recognized to bear colonial residues or conform to neoliberal demands. They predominantly manifest as legislative and administrative directives focusing on regulatory compliance, marketization, and privatization, neglecting the need for a comprehensive rationale or strategic vision for education. Government authorities develop policies within centralized educational systems following a top-down approach. This centralization limits autonomy of local educational institutions and educators, resulting in mandates that limit their ability to make decisions based on needs of their communities. State policies include accountability measures, standardized national testing, and school inspections. In certain countries, policies are disseminated through official newsletters, resulting in fragmented and scattered documents resembling a maze-like structure. This disorganization complicates navigation and comprehension, ultimately hindering usability and chances to refine those policies. In other countries, policies may be accessible on ministry websites. While this reflects better documentation, archiving, and organization, they often still fall short in meeting necessary standards for both formatting and content. Besides, despite some advancements in information systems, a systemic deficiency in evidence-based decision-making and research-driven policy formulation persists. This makes policies fail to address the needs and challenges faced by educators and students, misallocate resources, and hinder continuous improvement efforts due to a lack of monitoring and evaluation. Finally, many policies often involve the imposition of projects or initiatives developed through partnerships with local and international funding agencies. These entities usually aim to steer school improvement but are found ineffective and unsustainable in the Arab context with criticisms directed at these initiatives for being blind to region's context and local cultures. Through this poster, I aim to present a nuanced understanding of the turbulent nature of educational policy in the Arab region and the complexities and challenges associated with it. This research advocates for local reforms that develop new policies that are better formulated, thoroughly documented, more accessible, responsive to local school needs, inclusive to practitioners, and supported by data and evidence-based practices. Additionally, it opens avenues for further research on this underexplored topic in the Arab context.

Policy Development, Implementation and Disconnection: Exploring Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Workforce Crisis in England's Early Years Sector

Sunday, 6th July - 11:31: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 274

Ms. Cristina Motoca (University of Roehampton)

This research study explores stakeholders' perspectives on the workforce crisis in England's early years sector. It examines how policies were developed and implemented, where disconnects arise between policy intent and practical realities, and how these gaps might have influenced the early years workforce crisis. The justification for this focus stems from three factors that connect the terms policy, practice and research.

Reviewing the existing literature, the researcher situates this study within the broader early years research field to address the research aims, emphasise the study's rationale and provide a theoretical framework to guide the data analysis and discussion of the findings.

The early years sector has faced significant and persistent challenges for almost thirty years. On the one hand, the constant pressure of dealing with intensive policy changes to raise the quality of provisions for children and their families, affordability and availability, and on the other hand, with pressing issues related to workforce attraction and retention. Early years refers to the education and care provided by any early years organisation to children from birth until age five. In England, the early years' service is delivered by a marketized and privatised system of state-run nurseries, private, voluntary, and independent nurseries (PVIs), non-profit nurseries, schools, nursery chains, children centres and childminders.

The researcher draws on theoretical interpretations of these concepts, specifically employing Skinner's framework for selecting and interpreting the policy documents and, Lipsky's bottom-up policy implementation theory and the idea of his concept of the 'street-level bureaucrats' as analytical lenses. The researcher explores how multiple theoretical frameworks may be integrated to provide a robust foundation for addressing the research questions and analysing and discussing the findings.

An interpretivist paradigm is more appropriate for this study because it emphasises the unique context under investigation, interactive processes, and meanings that a quantitative approach cannot measure. In addition, a qualitative approach placed within the interpretivist paradigm will be used to analyse the perceptions of twenty early years stakeholders. Therefore, using four potential data sources, such as parents, leaders, early years educators and policy actors, data triangulation will be the key tool to assess the alignments or divergences (or a bit of both) that may arise in the data sets. The data will be collected from four sets of individual semi-structured interviews as a research method. As a result, a semi-structured interview schedule will be employed as the research tool. The interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. The researcher will use reflexive thematic analysis to analyse the data following its reduction and interpretation.

The study aims to address the following research questions by exploring stakeholders' perspectives:

RQ1: How do early years stakeholders view workforce-related policy development in England, and to what extent do they effectively address the root causes of the workforce crisis?

RQ2: What challenges might stakeholders face in implementing workforce policies, and how these may have exacerbated the current workforce crisis?

RQ3: How do stakeholders perceive the gap between policy intent and practical realities, and what solutions could effectively address the workforce crisis?

Educational Leadership Promotes Student Voice and Participation: Based on a Questionnaire Survey and Interviews with Superintendents of Board of Education in Japan

Sunday, 6th July - 11:39: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 180

Prof. Kaori Suetomi (Nihon University)

Educational Leadership Promotes Student Voice and Participation: Based on a Questionnaire Survey and Interviews with Superintendents of Board of Education in Japan

In this presentation, analysis and consideration about educational leadership that promotes student voice and participation based on a questionnaire survey of Japanese boards of education and schools, students and interviews with superintendents.

The background to this presentation is as follows. Japan was slow to promote children's rights, and as a result, formal system for student participation in education policy and school management did not progress, and student voices were not placed in the education system. However, this situation is changing in the 2020s. In 2022, Children Act was enacted by MPs, and rules were established that require the central and local governments to promote children's rights and achieve children's participation in all policy fields, including education policy.

The Ministry of Education has issued guidelines to promote student voices and participation in school management from 2019 that school rules should be reviewed by students to prevent human rights violations to student. And the guideline from 2022 that encourage students to participate in school management, including the development of school rules. However, promoting student voices and participation in school management is not a legal obligation for schools.

With this background, the research question for this report was set as: How can we promote student voice and participation? The importance of educational leadership by the superintendent of the Board of Education to promote change of schools and headteachers should be analysed.

The methodology is three questionnaire surveys and interviews with superintendents of education board in Japan. Three conducted questionnaire surveys are as follows, first survey is education boards survey in 2023, second survey is students in junior-high schools and high schools in 2024, the third survey is 1,333 high schools in the Kanto region of Japan in 2024 and interviews with superintendents of education in 2023-2024.

The three questionnaire surveys show that there are large disparities between regions and schools in terms of efforts to promote student voice and participation. It also points out that there is a high level of dissatisfaction among junior high and high school students with school rules, and that school rules and teachers that severely restrict students' freedom and rights. It also clarifies that the realisation of school management that promotes student voice and participation is related to the power balance between the superintendent of the Board of Education and school principals at the local government level.

Whether or not the superintendent is able to develop a compelling vision, philosophy and effective guidelines for the group of school principals is important for the realisation of educational policies and school management that promote student voice and participation.

Through interviews with superintendents, analysis and consideration is given about how educational leadership promotes student voice and participation in schools and education policies.

Shaping Ethical Leadership: Integrating Disability Studies and Ethical Decision-Making

Sunday, 6th July - 11:47: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 178

Mrs. Taylor Mowery (University of South Florida)

This paper examines the intersection of ethical constructs and disability studies, exploring how this intersection can reshape educational leadership, particularly through leaders' ethical decision-making. Disability studies critiques deficit-based medical perspectives of disability, emphasizing systemic barriers and structural inequities, and provides a critical lens for rethinking traditional approaches in education. Ethical constructs, such as Noddings' ethic of care, Rawls' justice as fairness, Nussbaum's capabilities approach, and Kant's deontological ethics, offer frameworks that guide leaders in navigating ethical dilemmas and promoting equity.

The primary aim of this paper is to demonstrate how integrating disability studies can shape educational leaders' ethical decision-making by connecting disability perspectives with ethical frameworks. This knowledge can empower leaders to lead with a clarity of critique, an approach that dismantles barriers and fosters inclusive practices leading to equitable experiences for all students. Furthermore, this understanding can inform leadership preparation, both pre-service and in-service, to better equip leaders with the skills to navigate complex issues of inclusivity and justice.

Through this inquiry, I advocate for a shift in leadership thinking, one that embraces ethical integrity, reflecting a commitment to social justice, with the potential to transform both leadership practices and existing educational systems.

Smoke and Mirrors. The recognition of leadership in ECEC

Sunday, 6th July - 11:55: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 111

Ms. Meredith Hare (Nottingham Trent University)

Smoke and mirrors: The recognition of Pedagogical Leadership in ECEC (Early....) policy. A comparison of English and Scottish policy.

The poster will make comparisons between English and Scottish Policy and curriculum documents and the recognition/impact of leadership in ECEC

Leadership is an under-researched area in ECEC. The focus for practitioners is the care and education of children; they are less likely to focus on themselves or their own development. Leadership is often invisible within the busy schedules in the Early Years. Practitioners do not always see that their everyday practices are connected to leadership. Key choices are made by practitioners on a minute-by-minute basis, with a wealth of knowledge about their children influencing each decision. Whilst leadership is essential, it is often overlooked by policymakers in ECEC, including the EYFS (DfE, 2024). In contrast to this, Education Scotland (2023) emphasizes the need for strong leadership and the role of pedagogues in ECEC, across the Early Childhood frameworks and policies. Practitioners in ECEC hold a huge amount of expertise but often remain invisible and undervalued. Effective leadership, especially pedagogical leadership, was highlighted by the Nutbrown review in 2012, to be one of the key factors that would impact outcomes for children in early years. Despite this, the review is one of the only documents that specifically highlights the need for pedagogical leadership and its distinct function in ECEC. Since publication, successive governments in England have attempted to professionalize the ECEC workforce with little consideration for the leadership development required to help practitioners develop the skills needed. Leadership is often used as a mechanism to help achieve targets and is data-driven in a neoliberal education system[PW2] (Moss, Holmes 2021) Leadership development is more frequently supported in other areas of education, both in policy and research

Despite significant international evidence and policy that quality provision in ECEC requires effective leadership (Fonsen, 2024, EPI, 2020, Nutbrown, 2012) it is still under-represented in research, policy and ECEC frameworks and policies in England. Whilst the demands upon practitioners increase, the recognition of the complexities of their role and the requirement for leading practice are still largely invisible.

However, due to the distinct nature of ECEC and the combination of care and education, ECEC requires a different leadership approach to the more traditional models of leadership, which are often masculine and are outcome-orientated.

ECEC is meant to advocate a play-based curriculum but is facing significant challenges due to school readiness agendas, and as a result, practitioners are under pressure to produce more outcomes and data to satisfy external quality measures. ECEC practitioners need to be able to justify the pedagogical approaches used to enhance the children's learning. The decision-making and confidence of practitioners are required to recognise, and develop pedagogical leadership to help protect the need for play, and the role of the ECEC practitioners in supporting children to achieve quality outcomes.

Developing a community of practice: a critical approach to promoting the professional development of reception class teachers

Sunday, 6th July - 12:03: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 61

Dr. Viki Veale (st marys university, twickenham), Mrs. Eleanor Milligan (University of East Anglia), Mrs. Lorna Williams (University of Worcester), Dr. Janet Morris (University of Greenwich)

Reception class teachers are liminal professionals. Concern is growing about the retention of reception class teachers in England at what has been a turbulent time both politically and socially. To address this concern, this initiative was set up collaboratively by four English HEI lecturers, all of whom had previously been Reception Class teachers themselves. The aim was to provide a positive, research informed community of practice for this liminal group of teachers.

Based on McKergow and Bailey's (2014) host leadership model, the initiative aimed to build connections, community and identity for Reception Class Teachers, following the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement's (NCCPE 2023) four key foci of people, purpose, process and evaluation.

Practitioner's voices lead ongoing action research into the effectiveness of this initiative. Adopting Driscoll's (2006) reflective model this presentation shares examples of what the initiative has provided, what impact this has had on practitioners and the implications for potential reforms to leadership of professional development in turbulent times.

Educational Leadership, School self-evaluation and Development planning: building synergy towards school improvement

Sunday, 6th July - 12:11: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 31

Ms. Denise Gatt (University of Malta), Prof. Christopher Bezzina (University of Malta)

Today's everchanging educational environment demands resilient educational leaders who are simultaneously reflective and strategic. Educational leaders today need all the support they can obtain to be able to lead schools towards continuous improvement. The school self-evaluation and development planning processes are strategic management tools whose original intent is to support leaders in leading their schools towards effective and measurable improvement. However, do leaders understand the strategic strength which these tools can offer? Do educational leaders possess the necessary aptitude and approach to utilise these tools towards improvement? The study portrayed in this paper addresses these questions. It discusses findings emanating from an in-depth two-year case study on the role of school self-evaluation and development planning within two primary schools in Malta. An important part of this research focuses on the role which school leaders sustain in the self-evaluation and development planning process. It also aims at looking at possible pitfalls which might be faced by leaders while focusing and reflecting upon ways of how the interaction and synergy between leadership and school development processes might be enhanced towards effective school improvement.

Leadership and Management of China-UK Transnational Education Collaborations: Perspectives from Literature

Sunday, 6th July - 12:19: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 67

Ms. Rachel Du Croz (University of Birmingham)

Overview:

There has been an exponential growth in Transnational Education (TNE) by UK universities in the last two decades (Healey, 2017). This has provided UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with a method to export high quality education and brand to reform and develop their international activities and income streams, and to enhance their reputation (Hatakenaka, 2004).

As a major contributor to the UK international student market, China has been seen as a key target for the export of UK higher education. Over the last 30 years, China's tertiary education has been evolving rapidly (QAA, 2013) during which time there has been a growing interest in UK Universities entering partnership agreements for delivery of education in China. In the early 2000's a new form of collaborative model emerged, the Joint Institute. These models require careful administration, management and leadership in order to balance two very different education cultures, student expectations and staff experiences both academic and non-academic.

Method:

Undertaking a systematic review of current literature I will investigate the landscape of China-UK TNE by examining existing scholarly works at a time when the UK Higher Education sector faces turbulent waters in its managerial and strategic decision making. I will investigate and critically analyse the methods and sampling used within this work to identify common themes and gaps which can inform opportunities to develop the knowledge in this expanding area.

Results:

I will show that much of the literature to date is based on International Branch Campus management, is written from the academic teaching perspective, and largely covers topics directly related to the delivery of, or opinions of, academic staff. Sample group sizes are small and do not represent the breadth of staff involved in delivering, managing, leading or administering of complex collaborative models.

Conclusion:

Using Critical Realism and the lens of complexity theory I will undertake mixed methods research which will begin with the thoughts and opinions of Professional Services staff, a group almost silent in published work (only 2 of 54 articles are written from this perspective). This poster presentation will act as a backdrop to understanding TNE and answering the following questions.

Research Questions:

- 1) What are the challenges in managing China-UK Joint Institutes?
- 2) What literature exists and where are the gaps?
- 3) What voices do we hear, and more importantly not hear?

How do School Leaders’ Life Experiences Shape and Influence Their Preparation and Development for Leadership Roles in the Ugandan School Context?

Sunday, 6th July - 12:27: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 141

Mrs. Lydia Besisira (University of Nottingham)

Focus: Leadership Development

Research Questions

1. What motivated Ugandan school leaders to seek leadership positions?
2. How do different stages of socialisation shape and influence school leaders’ learning?
3. What formal and informal socialisation processes enhance or inhibit Ugandan school leaders’ leadership learning?
4. How, if at all, has their leadership learning impacted their practice?

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

- School leaders require specialised Knowledge, skills and attributes
- Uganda often appoint school leaders based only on teaching experience
- Transition from teacher to leader is a complex, lifelong, continuous process
- Limited studies on contextualised Sub-Saharan Leadership preparation development
- Explore and understand how school leaders learn
- Examine what experiences inhibit or enhance Leadership development

2. THEORY AND TOPOLOGY

Four Phases of Career Socialisation Theory

1. Anticipatory childhood and Early career socialisation to develop leadership skills
2. Professional socialisation formal and informal Leadership Learning
3. Organisation socialisation enacting leadership roles for specific schools, understanding complexities, values and norms of the role
4. Personal: conceptualisation of norms and identity as a leader

Hallinger (2018) Topology

- Contexts and related antecedents
- Leadership and management roles and actions
- Education Systems and School Contexts
- Leadership preparation and development

3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

- Interpretive phenomenological approach
 - Hermeneutic understanding of school perceptions of their lived experiences
 - Purposive sampling of 20 school leaders from the Public. Private and Faith school
- Methods:** Autobiographical life grids, semi-structured interviews and Documentary analysis
- Data Analysis:** Thematic Analysis

4. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

- Participants reflect on how their lived experiences have cultivated a sense of school leader identity
- Participants enhance the Leadership development processes in their school and other similar schools.

Exploration of Heterogeneity in Attitudes towards the role of School Business Professionals

Sunday, 6th July - 12:35: Poster Presentations (Renaissance Suite) - Poster - Abstract ID: 72

Ms. Andrea Howard (University of Chester)

The role of school business professionals has become increasingly pivotal in the modern educational landscape, however anecdotal evidence suggests great heterogeneity across the profession. This study employed a mixed methods approach to explore the role and experiences of school business professionals. Grounded theory methodology was used to analyse a quantitative survey of one hundred and twenty-eight school business professionals to provide broader contextual understanding of the landscape and to select five school business professionals, from a range of settings, at various points in their careers, to take part in further exploration through qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews.

Findings revealed a complex interplay between professional identity, role perception, and school culture. While some school business professionals experienced good levels of support and recognition, others faced challenges related to workload, undervaluation, and career progression. The study highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping the school business professional role, emphasising the need for a supportive and collaborative school environment.

By understanding the factors influencing the professional identity and experiences of school business professionals, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role's impact on school effectiveness. The findings have implications for policy and practice, advocating for increased recognition and support for school business professionals, as well as the development of clear career pathways within the education sector.

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