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HertsCam Network: supporting non-positional teacher leadership internationally

The HertsCam Network is an independent teacher-led, not-for-profit organisation¹ which began as a partnership in the 1990s between the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and one of the local education authorities. Ten years ago, HertsCam became entirely independent, its programmes being led by teachers and its governance in the form of a Board of Trustees who are mostly school principals. HertsCam became known for programmes that empowered and enabled teachers as agents of change. For example, the school-based Certificate in Teacher Leadership programme, facilitated by a team of experienced teachers, and the MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning, taught entirely by scholar practitioners. In 2008, with the help of Open Society Foundations, HertsCam launched the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative to enable partners in other countries to launch similar programmes.

Under the ITL banner, teacher leadership support programmes were launched in most of the Western Balkans countries from Bulgaria to Bosnia & Herzegovina. Other European countries including Greece, Portugal, Romania and Turkey joined the initiative. In 2012, [a report](#) documented the achievement and put forward a set of principles to guide similar work in the future. Later, programmes were established in Egypt, Palestine, Morocco and Kazakhstan. Currently, HertsCam is working with Education International in the context of the [Teacher Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment](#) project. HertsCam is inducting teachers into the role of facilitator who are using the tried and tested teacher leadership support methodology to enable teachers in Brazil, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea and Switzerland to become agents of change.

A number of assumptions underpin this work. One is that teacher-led change is fundamental to any sustainable improvements in practice. This is seen as valuable to school principals who

¹ Registered UK Charity Number 1154463

are interested in school improvement and building collaborative professional cultures in their schools. In Kazakhstan, it has been argued that the aims of government led reforms are furthered when teachers take ownership of change in their schools ([Qanay & Frost, 2020](#)). In contexts such as Palestine, the programme was seen as having the potential to contribute to social change by building independence and self-reliance ([Ramahi, 2019](#)). In the Western Balkans, the appeal was linked to the desire to build democratic ways of life in a post-conflict environment.

Key aspects of the methodology include enabling experienced teachers to become facilitators who support groups of colleagues in their own schools over the course of an academic year. They use a set of tools in workshop settings to enable teachers to engage in reflection and discussion through which each individual can design and lead a development project. The focus of each project is determined by the individual teacher after reflection on their professional values and concerns. It might be, for example, 'Developing strategies to raise students' aspirations through dance training' or 'Developing oracy as a tool for learning' or 'Developing strategies to improve the resilience of disadvantaged students'. Membership of the group serves as a source of mutual critical friendship. Certification is based on evidence of participation in the programme and the leadership of development projects collected in a portfolio. Participants are invited to share narrative accounts of their projects in a series of networking scenarios. Many of these are published in a variety of ways.

Teachers report that this form of support not only enables them to improve professional practice in their own classrooms and in that of colleagues, but it also improves their morale and levels of self-efficacy. It therefore contributes significantly to staff recruitment and retention.

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