

Teacher Leadership

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Teacher Leadership is in two parts. The first part includes brief articles written by teachers and edited by the editors. The second part includes short ‘stories’ of teacher-led development work written by the editors on behalf of the teachers who led the projects described.

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Editorial

David Frost

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Our regular readers may have been perplexed by the delay in the publication of this issue, for which I sincerely apologise. The reason for this is that the journal has been a victim of its own success in that it has played a part in developing the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) project. This has involved a wide range of events and activities in the 15 countries now taking part and has taken up all available time. However, the attention of the editorial team is now fully on the journal and the next two issues will follow quickly on the heels of this one.

The *Teacher Leadership* journal began as an outlet for the work of teachers in the HertsCam Network, but the inspiration carried by the stories and articles we published has led to a flowering of such work elsewhere in the world. This is reflected to a modest extent in this issue by the inclusion of material from, or about, teachers who belong to different networks. We carry a story from a teacher who was supported through her membership of a ‘Learning Circle’ facilitated by the National Union of Teachers in the UK; another comes from a network in Istanbul which is affiliated to the ITL project. One of the articles comes from a teacher who belongs to Cantarnet¹. We expect this widening of the scope of the journal to gather momentum in future issues to reflect the way the concept of teacher leadership, as it is represented here, is increasingly adopted in many parts of the world as the key to educational transformation.

The scope of the journal may have expanded to include a wider range of teachers, but the focus remains the same. In the very first editorial I said this.

Teacher Leadership breaks new ground in that it provides a forum for teachers to present credible yet accessible accounts of their learning-centred leadership work.

¹ Cantarnet – The Canterbury Action Research Network

We are also continuing with the policy of publishing two different types of material: one category is brief stories written on behalf of teachers who have led development projects or innovations; the other is more substantial articles written by teachers who have submitted their work for an academic award and have been edited by members of the editorial team.

Stories

In this issue we begin with a story about Marie Metcalfe's project in which she intervened to improve the engagement of families from ethnic minorities and to promote pupils' self-esteem by developing a 'language of the week' programme. It is interesting to note how a teacher who is provided with support to identify and address her professional concerns naturally turns her attention to questions of inclusion, diversity and social justice. The idea of respecting the students' perspective is also evident in Andrew Whiteway's work on learning poetry, but in his case the creativity of the teachers who are drawn into Andrew's project was more to the fore.

Creative solutions to the problem of how to engage young people in learning is again explored in Kristina Barczy's development project which focused on Mathematics. It is interesting that a key learning point for Kristina was that the changes she made seemed very modest to her but were very significant for her students. The availability of new technologies in recent years has enabled teachers to become very creative in the classroom. The Mary Niven story illustrates this well. Her use of video cameras to enable her young students to develop their communication skills is very innovative, but it is interesting that her creativity also extended to the way she consulted them – by asking them to debate the merits of using ICT.

Student choice is at the heart of the story about a development project in which Elizabeth Edwards and Sophie Gilbert collaborated. These two primary school teachers led a ground breaking project in which children were given many opportunities to exercise choice and to participate in curriculum planning. Student choice and the exercise of leadership continues to reverberate in the story about Penny Richardson's work. She led the development of an externally generated programme called 'Learning to Lead' which enables students to form and manage their own project teams in order to tackle a range of concerns that they have identified themselves.

The stories section concludes with a contribution from a teachers' network in Istanbul. Here we see an account of Nerin Kabaalioglu's initiative to develop active learning approaches in a Turkish primary school. Her influence is widened when the parents are drawn into the discussion about how students become engaged through active learning.

Articles

The four articles included in this issue of *Teacher Leadership* cover both substantive classroom innovation and matters concerned with the processes and contexts within which teachers are able to make such a difference. Andrew Emms' account of developing the use of the radio station in a primary school explores in greater depth the issues about creativity and the use of ICT that appear in some of the stories mentioned above. Again it is interesting to see both a focus on the use of new technology, such as the Audacity software, and also more well-established pedagogical principles such as the power of dialogue in curriculum development.

The dialogue theme is taken up in the article by Matt Roberts and Amanda Roberts² in which they discuss their project focusing on a 'knowledge creation and transfer' initiative that seeks to foster inter-school collaboration. In the present policy environment it is instructive to read about a deliberate attempt to enable teachers to share knowledge across so many schools in the same town.

Most of the material in *Teacher Leadership* has something to say about the affective dimension of learning, but in Corrine Harris' article we have a very explicit and direct focus on emotional literacy as the key to enabling both teachers and pupils to improve the way they deal with the emotional challenges of school life, classroom learning and relationships. Corinne, an early years teacher, was supported in her work through her membership of a network facilitated by Canterbury Christ Church University. Like the other teachers referred to above, she had explicit support and encouragement that enabled her to exercise leadership.

The final article in this issue of *Teacher Leadership* focuses on the evaluation of such a programme of support. Val Hill is not only an Assistant Headteacher in a secondary school but she is also a member of the team that supports the International Teacher

² There is no family connection

Leadership project. She is one of a growing band of experienced teachers who have dedicated their creativity to the question of how we can enable teachers to exercise leadership and be maximally influential in their schools. She has built her own expertise through a scholarly, inquiry-based approach which enables her to share robust insights.

The material described above is another powerful body of evidence that demonstrates and illustrates the miracles that can be achieved by teachers. I believe that these accounts serve as an inspiration to other teachers who want to pursue their vocation and lead the way to better teaching and learning strategies. It has been evident for some time that this kind of inspiration works well within localised networks, but it is very encouraging to discover, as we have done in the last year or so, that it can also work globally. The ITL project includes networks in countries as diverse as New Zealand and Moldova and what is remarkable is that stories of teacher leadership can be inspirational across national and cultural boundaries. A summary of the ITL project can be found on the journal website – www.teacherleadership.org.uk

Marie Metcalfe's Development Work
**Raising awareness of language and
cultural diversity**

at the Sacred Heart Primary School, Battersea, London

Marie was a member of a 'Learning Circle' sponsored by the National Union of Teachers in the UK. The programme was facilitated and accredited by the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. The group met at the NUT's London headquarters to support teachers from a wide range of schools in taking the initiative and developing their capacity to lead development projects.

Marie works in a large primary school in Battersea, London. Over half of the pupils have English as an additional language, with twenty nine different languages being spoken by the school population. Marie was concerned that there was very little contact between the school and the families from these different ethnic groups and thought that a focus on the children's first languages might help with the learning of English and literacy skills in general. It seemed to Marie that raising awareness of the different languages spoken by pupils would help to affirm and celebrate the children's cultural background and promote their self-esteem. Marie was also keen to reach out to the different language communities in the school and encourage their participation in school life.

Marie investigated how other schools had developed innovative ways of celebrating diversity. She 'googled' and found the 'Language of the Month' project which was developed at Newbury Park Primary School in Redbridge. This project seemed ready made for Marie's purposes and she could see how the idea could be adapted for use in her own school.

A different language was chosen each month and celebrated through school assemblies and attractive displays. In assemblies, speakers of the chosen language presented some words and images. The children's families were invited to come to the school to contribute to a display about their language and culture. A letter was also sent home to parents asking them to translate some key words for display purposes. Both parents and staff were very positive about this project. Parents' comments included:

My son got really interested in our language and wanted me to get some books on it.

My son has been teaching me to say hello in Spanish.

Teachers acknowledged the positive effect of ‘Language of the Month’ on children’s sense of pride in their cultural heritage and their enhanced sense of agency through becoming ‘language experts’.

It has made them feel really proud of their language. They are really keen to show off.

They all want a turn at being ‘Language of the Month’ experts.

This project continued to grow and Marie drew up a plan to respond to ‘Shine Week’ – a national festival celebrating the talents of all young people. This involved organising a range of arts projects linked to the various communities in the school. Parents would lead these projects. Marie also ran a film club to link with the language of the month, showing films in different languages after school. The children are really excited when the film is in their language and display a sense of pride in their language. They also write reviews of the films in their own language.

Building on the success of the ‘Language of the Month’ initiative, Marie held a series of language-based coffee mornings as a way of encouraging parents to meet one another and to become more involved with the school. Teaching Assistants from each of the main language groups within the school helped to support both this initiative and parents’ growing involvement with school activities. Parents have begun to come into school to support cooking lessons for example and to read stories to children in their home language.

The school has a growing number of Amharic and Tigrinya speakers. Through links with the local refugee project, mums became more involved in school life and children are now taking a more active role in the local community.

Following this project, Marie moved on to link the children’s interest in language with the PSHE³ curriculum, using it to raise discussions around manners. Teachers are also encouraging speaking and

³ PSHE – Personal, Social & Health Education

listening skills, supporting the children in speaking in longer, grammatically correct and coherent sentences.

Marie found her involvement in the London Learning Circle to be invigorating. Despite the participants' wide range of backgrounds, their commonality of purpose, to improve their own practice and the education of children in their care, bound them together. Marie is very pleased that her development work is having a wide impact. She wrote this in her portfolio:

It has been more successfully taken up by some teachers than others but with the continued support of the senior management team it is being encouraged and all staff have adopted the use of a (languages) display board and the morning greeting (in the language of the month).

At the completion of this project Marie planned to continue her development work by networking with other local schools. She remains excited by the possibilities she has unleashed.

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Andrew Whiteway's Development Work
**Developing students' independent approach
to understanding poetry**
at The Barclay School, Stevenage

Andrew was a 'newly qualified teacher' at a secondary school when he began his development work. When he stopped to reflect on his professional values he realised that, although he believed that helping students to become independent learners should be a key focus of a teacher's work, his actual approach to the teaching of poetry with his older students did not reflect these beliefs. He wanted to explore ways to change his practice.

Andrew began by asking his colleagues in the English department to give him one word to describe their experience of teaching poetry at Key Stage 4. The words chosen by the teachers demonstrated that they enjoyed it, and were excited by it, but their students did not appear to share this enthusiasm.

Andrew began to look for new strategies to increase both students' enjoyment of poetry and their ability to talk and write about it. For him the key would be to develop their independence as learners of poetry. He used a list of 'qualities of the independent learner', developed by his colleagues during a staff development day, to analyse his current methods of teaching poetry. The list below includes some examples.

Independent learners are:

- willing to take risks
- confident in themselves
- able to make decisions
- prepared to take action
- creative thinkers
- well organised
- able to collaborate
- reflective and self-aware

He then planned an extended homework project, designed to broaden and deepen students' understanding of poetry and to develop their ability to give a personal response to it. Students' responses to the homework project helped Andrew to plan a series of lessons which encouraged the qualities he and his colleagues had identified. He decided not to use the poems specified on the examination syllabus in this series of lessons. Instead, he talked with his colleagues about the poets they thought would entertain, engage and challenge students. Armed with this list, Andrew selected poems that he would use in the series of lessons he was planning.

Having developed a series of lesson plans featuring the poems he had selected, Andrew tested out some of the activities through a workshop with his colleagues. The discussion he led focused on the difference between helping students to understand pre-determined meanings and helping them to formulate and explore their own meanings. He gave his colleagues some of the poetry-related tasks he had designed for his students.

Possible tasks for students:

- Provide a dramatic reading of one of the poems, focusing on communicating the message of the poem in a new and original way.
- Use a multimedia program such as Windows Moviemaker; produce the poem as a small movie, selecting images, key quotes and appropriate music.
- Try and reinterpret one of the poems as a different 'text' – a short story perhaps, or a diary entry.

The reaction of colleagues, their comments and insights helped Andrew to complete the planning of his series of lessons.

Andrew then began to teach his poetry module. He used some unusual stimulus material to help students to engage with the poetry on a personal level, capturing their attention and stimulating their imaginations (Egan, 1992; Hughes, 2001). He used music with themes similar to those in the poems. He also appealed to visual learners through using well-known pieces of art, for example, Edward Munch's 'Scream', to try to draw connections between emotions and poetry. To help students to develop their skills as

independent learners, Andrew acted as facilitator rather than teacher and gave instructions that were open to interpretation. Students were supported in finding meanings in the poem rather than being expected to learn the analysis provided by the teacher.

Andrew asked students what they thought of this approach. Generally, they reported that their levels of confidence had risen in the course of the project, although he was surprised that many of his students expressed a preference for teacher-led, 'traditional' approaches to the teaching of poetry. He subsequently read another teacher's account of innovation in which there was a similar response from students when challenged by the expectation of learning more independently (Newbrook, 2007). An unexpected and welcome outcome of Andrew's project was the development of students' abilities to comment on their learning in response to his questions. Students were able to articulate what helped them to learn. They were also able to share the reasoning process which had led them to their views, as shown in the example below.

I prefer a mixture of both. The independent lessons allowed me to use my own techniques to interpret the poems. The studying lessons also strengthened my thought and aided my understanding.

This development work gave Andrew a taste for leading the development of students' abilities as independent learners. He resolved to continue to work collaboratively with colleagues to develop this further. A key challenge for the future was to find ways to address the problem of some students' preference for dependency.

Following the completion of this project, Andy enrolled for the HertsCam MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning which provided the support for his next project focusing on the use of multi-media in the classroom. During the second year of his masters programme, Andy was appointed to the post of Head of Media Studies at another school.

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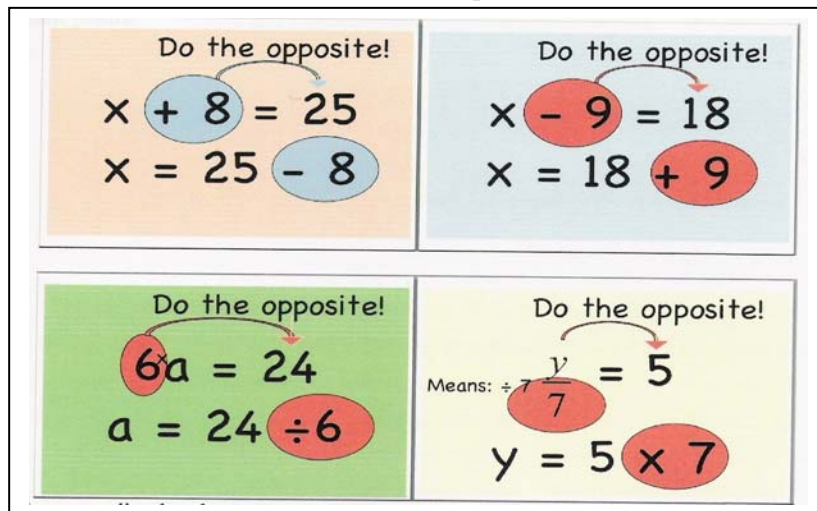
Krisztina Barczy's Development Work
**Developing student involvement in
Maths lessons**
at Birchwood High School, Bishops Stortford

One of Krisztina's main challenges as a Maths teacher at Birchwood was persuading some of her middle and lower ability students to adopt a positive attitude towards Maths. Students often feel they cannot achieve and this affects their learning disposition. She needed to find new ways forward. Perhaps raising levels of student involvement and participation in the lesson would be one way forward. After talking with a colleague who had previously undertaken a development project focused on motivation, she decided to find out more about the students' views of her Maths lessons.

Krisztina invited four Year 8 students and four Year 10 students to work with her on her project. She began by giving students a chart which showed different activities which often featured in Maths lessons. She asked the students to rate each activity in terms of their levels of interest and motivation to learn and to write in speech bubbles to explain their score. She also asked them to tell her how Maths lessons made them feel. She then analysed what they had written. Many of the students used very negative words to describe their feelings about their Maths lessons including 'boring' and 'makes me feel stupid'. Krisztina arranged a discussion with the students to explore these feelings in more depth. The discussion was very informative and helped Krisztina to plan what she would do differently in her lessons. Her determination to change was supported by her reading in which she found encouragement to be reflective and innovative in her practice (Ernest, 2006).

Krisztina tried out many new strategies, including shortening her starters, using more brightly coloured work sheets and increasing the type and volume of her praise and rewards. Two of the changes that she put in place are particularly interesting. She liked the idea of 'support cards' or 'helping cards' which she came across in her reading (Zhumdikova, 2006). She prepared big, colourful cards for her Year 8 class, with examples of ways of working from the previous lesson or of important formula (Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: 'Helping cards' for solving equations



At the start of each lesson, a group of students are asked to choose the cards which they think will help the class to learn better in that lesson and to stick their chosen cards on the wall.

The second strategy involved enabling students to become more actively involved in both the content and the process of the lesson. Year 8 students were asked to develop questions which were then used for the mental Maths test. They developed starter activities which they used in pairs rather than whole-class activities led by the teacher. Both Year 8 and 10 students were invited to come up and write on the whiteboard more frequently to share an answer or explain a point. An element of competition was also introduced, with teams working against one another to find an answer. Year 10 students were asked to self-assess their progress at the end of the lesson and set themselves targets for future achievement, an idea that Kristina had come across in her reading (Biehler and Snowman, 1997).

Krisztina was rather reticent about sharing her ideas with her colleagues as she felt she was inexperienced. However, with the support of others in her 'Teacher Led Development Work' group she did share what she was learning with teachers across the school and asked for any comments on her project. She found their feedback really helped her to reflect on her learning. After a few lessons Krisztina asked the students to share their views with her on how the changes were impacting on their disposition and on their learning.

She was surprised to discover that what she considered as small changes had really had a significant impact on the way students felt about their Maths lessons and their learning. The responses from the students indicated to Krisztina that feeling a sense of responsibility for their own learning was having a positive impact on the students. She reflected on this in her portfolio.

I learnt that I can motivate students not only with the strategies or activities I use in class but by making them feel they have a voice in what we do. I think it was important for them to see some of their ideas appearing in the lessons.

The eight students who had particularly guided Kristina's project through their feedback remained interested and committed throughout and were keen to know how she would move her development work forward. Students now realise that they can work with Krisztina to improve teaching and learning in their lessons.

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Mary Niven's Development Work
**Using ICT to support the development
of literacy**
at Beechfield School, Watford

Mary trained to be a teacher in Scotland. After a year teaching in Dundee she moved to her current school, a primary school in Hertfordshire, which caters mostly for students with English as an Additional Language. Many students also have speech and language difficulties. The development of students' literacy therefore is a priority for the school. ICT⁴ is developing fast in Mary's school and teachers and students enjoy using a recently-developed ICT suite and the Smartboards that have been installed in every classroom. Mary wanted to develop the use of ICT to support students in developing their skills and abilities in speaking and listening.

Mary discussed her initial thoughts with colleagues in her school and they all agreed that the project would be very worthwhile. She was particularly interested in the 'C' of ICT and so investigated the literature to learn more about how ICT could support improvements in literacy and communication (Rudd and Tylesley, 2006). Mary learned that there is a growing body of evidence which points to the positive impact of ICT on the learning of students with special educational needs (Condoe and Munroe, 2007). She therefore began to plan the detail of her development work. She decided to focus on nine children in her Year 5 class who either had specific speech and language difficulties or who were reluctant to get involved in discussion. The activities she planned would be undertaken by her whole class but would address the specific needs of her target group.

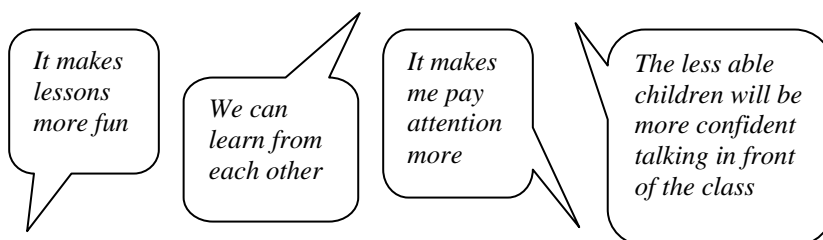
The first step for Mary was to amend her Literacy Unit plans to include the use of ICT. She began with a unit which focused on developing children's understanding and use of instructional texts through recipes. The children evaluated a range of recipes in terms of their organisation, layout and clarity. They wrote their own instructional text, a recipe for chocolate truffles, which they then made. The children were asked to comment on what they were doing as they made their truffles, as if they were taking part in a TV

⁴ ICT – Information and Communication Technology

cook show. They filmed themselves using Digital Blue video cameras. A Digital Blue camera is a hand-held video recorder which can be easily used by children to create movies. These can then be edited and downloaded for viewing on a laptop or Smartboard.

The children edited their cookery programmes and watched the playback with interest. They were asked not only to watch but also to make evaluative comments on how well they and their classmates had used instructional language in their 'cookery programme'. Most children found this a very useful and enjoyable experience although some children in Mary's focus group appeared to be shy and even embarrassed and did not appear to enjoy watching themselves. Mary decided that it might be more beneficial for the children to work in smaller groups for this type of activity in future. This would perhaps give the children with speech and language difficulties the confidence to want to feed back more readily on what they are seeing and feeling. Mary put this into practice when children moved onto their next ICT and language-based activity, this time creating an explanatory text. The children had to make powerpoint slides on the Smartboard to explain how to create such a text. They then filmed themselves making this presentation. Again, they watched the film and discussed what they had learned.

Mary wanted to know how the children felt about the impact of her experiment in using ICT on the development of their literacy. In order to gain their views she set up a debate in which the children had to try to persuade her to let them use ICT more frequently in literacy lessons. The children offered numerous reasons, for example:



Mary found that the project had numerous benefits. On a personal level, she became more confident in using ICT software and hardware to support her curriculum aims. Students also became more confident in speaking in front of their peers and in evaluating one another's work. They also became more independent, knowing

when to use different technologies in an appropriate way to support their own learning. Other teachers were inspired by both Mary's formal presentation of what she had achieved through her project at a staff meeting and also by seeing Mary at work with students. Both teachers and teaching assistants became more confident in using ICT themselves following a session in which Mary demonstrated how to use the Digital Blue camera.

At the conclusion of her project Mary was excited by what she discovered about the way in which using ICT can provide those children with speech and language difficulties with a creative way of expressing themselves. She looked forward to working with her colleagues to help them develop their understanding and practice still further.

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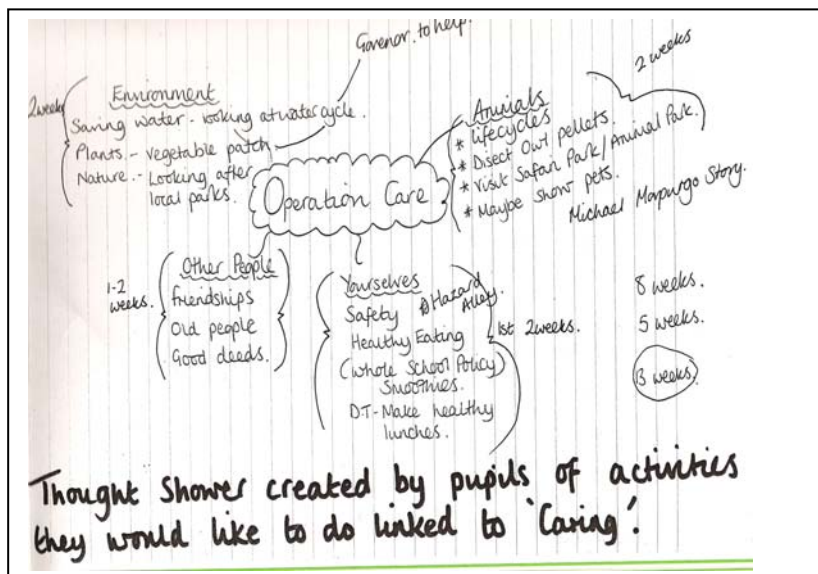
Elizabeth Edwards and Sophie Gilbert's
Development Work
Planning topics with rather than for pupils
at The Wroxham School, Potters Bar

Elizabeth and Sophie both teach at The Wroxham School which is at the centre of the Potters Bar Primary Learning Network. The school has a well developed pupil-centred ethos with a commitment to values such as voice, participation, choice, dialogue and self-direction (MacBeath *et al.*, 2008). A key dimension of the pedagogic culture in the school is teaching without ability labelling which relates to the school's involvement in the 'Learning without Limits' project (Hart, Dixon, Drummond and McIntyre, 2004). This approach involves classrooms being organised with the personalised learning needs of every child in mind. Children are given choices and opportunities to challenge themselves in their learning, setting their own targets. Formative assessment and dialogue about teaching and learning are key to the school's practice.

Sophie and Elizabeth had been impressed by the way children respond to the opportunities given to them to direct their own learning and wanted to build on this. They had been following a timetable of individual subjects, based on QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency) schemes of work and the literacy and numeracy strategies (DfEE, 1998), but wanted to explore ways in which they could develop a more creative approach to the curriculum (Fisher and Williams, 2005). They decided to experiment with a more creative, theme-based approach to the curriculum which would build transferable skills and provide further opportunities for children to influence the direction and content of their learning experiences. Although working collaboratively, Elizabeth and Sophie had distinct roles in the development work.

Elizabeth worked with her Year 5 class and Sophie with her Year 2 class. Elizabeth had less experience of this way of working and found it challenging at first. This meant that she would only plan a week ahead and this made her feel disorganised. However, an advantage was that the flexibility enabled her to incorporate into her plans ideas from the children. For example, in the context of the Autumn Term theme, 'The Aztecs', the children suggested making

As both teacher and pupils became more confident with this approach, the children were able, not only to help to plan the detail of the topic, but also to initiate the theme itself. The name of the 'Operation Care' theme came from the pupils themselves.



Sophie and Elizabeth found their working partnership to be mutually supportive and enhanced their own learning. Sophie commented on this in her journal.

On reflection I believe that the 'Learning without Limits' principles I value so much when working with the children in my classroom are just as important in our relationships with adults. The opportunities Elizabeth and I have had for collaboration, support, discussion, taking risks and reflection are just as important for adults as for children.

In their own evaluation of the project Elizabeth and Sophie highlighted many positive outcomes. The children responded extremely well to the creative curriculum approach. They were enthusiastic, independent learners who were happy to tackle any challenge and were able to apply the new skills they had learned. Involving children in the planning process had a very powerful effect as they felt empowered and valued through undertaking this important role in their learning. As teachers, Sophie and Elizabeth found that this approach enabled them to develop a truly honest relationship with children in their classes. Their new way of working

both provided meaningful learning experiences for the children and enabled a continued and productive dialogue about learning in the classroom.

At the conclusion of that stage of the development work it was clear that more work would need to be done on assessment: for example reports to parents would have to be changed as they had always been subject-based. However, parent consultations had been very successful; children had been going home full of enthusiasm for their topic work and had been discussing it with their parents. At Wroxham, children write their own reports and these tell how they had become unafraid of challenges and saw risk taking as an important part of their learning journey. Sophie and Elizabeth were encouraged and determined to continue to develop their skills-based curriculum, working with their new classes to ensure that they develop a meaningful curriculum together.

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Penny Richardson's Development Work
**Fostering student leadership through
'Learning to Lead'**
at the Hertfordshire and Essex High School,
Bishops Stortford

Penny was the 'link teacher' for the 'Learning to Lead' (LtoL) programme in her school. It was her responsibility to initiate and develop the programme as a key strand of the work that arose from the school's special leadership status. Penny hoped that LtoL would enable a large proportion of the students to become actively involved in all aspects of school life. She was keen to encourage students who did not usually nominate themselves for leadership roles to become involved.

The Learning to Lead initiative began in the Blue School in Wells, Somerset as a way of enhancing student engagement. The LtoL model involves a school wide survey and discussion to identify priorities for action. Students are then invited to join project teams focusing on those priorities. These typically include teams such as 'The recycling team' or 'Improving the school playgrounds team' as well as ones dedicated to caring for chickens and growing food in the school grounds. Each team is provided with induction and support to enable them to become self-leading teams able to take action to transform their schools and communities. These teams all report back to the School Forum which makes decisions about how best to support the process. The School Forum, facilitated by students themselves appoints representatives to join a committee which includes senior leadership team members to ensure cooperation.

Penny and her school were involved in a national pilot scheme in which Learning to Lead was evaluated by a team at the University of Cambridge (Frost and MacBeath, 2010). The report makes the practice visible and identifies the benefits to the students and to their schools. It concludes that the type of student leadership supported by LtoL has enormous potential to transform the experience of school for young people and, in so doing, transform the school itself. The evidence points to radical shifts in student dispositions, marked improvement in the quality of relationships and the development of participative school cultures which enable young people to flourish

and achieve.

At Herts and Essex School Penny enabled over 100 students to establish 6 teams: the Beautiful School team, the Recycling team, the Energy team, the Toilets team, the Transport team and the Sixth Form team. She provided each team with a half-day training workshop in which they were inducted into the key techniques for self-management including reviewing experience, seeking consensus, action planning and so on. Thereafter the team meetings were held at lunchtimes and led by the students themselves.

The initiative was introduced to staff at the start of the school year so that all colleagues were aware of the aims of the project. Colleagues were positive in their feedback and acknowledged the value of the work planned. Penny trained the students, starting with the Senior Prefect team, in order to pilot her training material which had been given to her by the 'Learning to Lead' company. The team was very enthusiastic and keen to leave the school with a legacy; they produced a detailed action plan for introducing vertical tutoring into the Sixth Form. It was the first session they had held as a team and it helped them to focus their aims. They gave Penny useful feedback on the training material which she was able to adapt and use with the other teams.

Penny was then ready to introduce the project to the whole school and arranged for an online survey to be administered to all students during a two week period in October. She booked the IT room for every form group during a twenty minute afternoon registration period so that all students had the opportunity to complete the survey. It focused on the following topics, expressed as 'Have your say' statements.

- Have your say about food and drink in our school
- Have your say about communication in our school
- Have your say about learning in our school
- Have your say about the use of rewards and sanctions in our school
- Have your say about the outside of our school – is it a green and pleasant environment?
- Have your say about the use of the library and its facilities
- Have your say about the inside of our school. Are you threatened by other students in the toilets? Are there places to

go at break and lunch / are classrooms comfortable places to learn?

- Have your say about the use of energy / recycling / litter in our school.
- Have your say about transport to and from the school. Do you feel safe on your journey to school / in the bike sheds / riding a bike in the long school skirts?

Once Penny had received the results of the survey she planned a tutorial session ‘This is Our School Whole School Planning’ session in which the students analysed what the school community had said about aspects of school life and agreed what would be the single most important change to improve the life of the whole school community. It was at this point she really began to appreciate the challenges she faced. One such challenge was finding time to work with the students; it was recommended that the ‘This is Our School’ session ran for two hours but she was only able to use the brief afternoon registration session. Her strategy was to adapt the material and persuade the form tutors to incorporate the session into the briefing period.

This careful planning ensured that every form provided written feedback which enabled her to agree the six teams: Senior Prefects, Beautiful School, Energy, Recycling, Toilets and Transport. Penny ran three lunchtime sessions when students had the opportunity to sign up for a team and to find out more information. The initiatives that the students were keen to be involved in varied from painting the classrooms in different colours, installing wind turbines, creating a garden, to having full size mirrors and hand dryers in the toilets. Finally Penny ran a team training session at the end of which each team produced an aim and a plan for their first project.

Penny acknowledged that Learning to Lead had wide ranging impact on the students.

- It gave students lessons for lifelong learning through doing
- It involved students across the whole school from Year 7 to the Sixth Form
- It was inclusive of all students
- It met the ‘Every Child Matters’ goals
- It developed students as active citizens
- It developed students’ enterprise skills

- It developed students as self directed learners
- It provided opportunities for enjoyment

For the school, the initiative helped to develop in the school a culture where the views of young people were respected and they were seen to be at the heart of the school community.

As a member of the HertsCam Network, Penny became aware that a number of teachers in other schools were creating opportunities for student leadership; she wanted to create networking opportunities so that ideas could be shared and opportunities created for the students involved in the various initiatives could contact each other. She led a discussion group at the HertsCam Network event under the title: 'Creating a Network for Teachers Leading Student Leadership'.

When the evaluation study was published in the following year, Penny was invited to take a group of students to share their experience at a national conference at the headquarters of the National Union of Teachers. The event was sponsored by the NUT and the HCD foundation which supports student leadership work at the Faculty of Education. The session led by Penny and her students was an inspiration to the teachers and students from schools throughout the UK.

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Nerin Kabaalioglu's Development Work Active learning in a Grade 3 classroom at Orhan Gazi School, Istanbul

Nerin is a Grade 3 teacher⁵ who identifies herself as someone who loves teaching, children and self-development. She always seeks opportunities to participate in professional development activities. She works in a school where students come from a low socio-economic background. She was concerned that students were not taking responsibility for their own learning; they were not showing enough interest in learning and seemed quite passive in lessons. She wanted to grow students who are hungry for learning and discovery. She wanted active learners, who are critical, innovative and intellectual.

Nerin started her development work, reading widely about 'active learning' (Watkins, Carnell and Lodge, 2007), 'multiple intelligences' (Gardner, 1983, 1993 and 1999) and 'differentiated instruction' (Tomlinson, 1999). She found a survey instrument focusing on active learning and applied it in her classroom. It confirmed that her lessons were not engaging and challenging enough and some students were bored. She realised that the students were not to blame and it was quite understandable that they should behave like this. Once she became more aware of this, she was able to see clearly that some students were drawing or daydreaming during the lesson. She started to take note of the behaviours that told her when students are really bored. She also realised that her taking the centre stage was pushing students to be passive. She said to herself 'it is not about me teaching. It is about them learning'.



She arranged a discussion session with her students. She asked them why they were bored, what their interests were and what kinds of activities they wanted. Students suggested activities they would enjoy. She was surprised to find out

⁵ Grade 3 – students are 8-9 years old

how much students are aware of their own preferences. Every student was different. She discussed what she found out about her class in a staff meeting and others suggested that she could design activities according to each student's intelligence. She found a multiple intelligences profiling tool and used it with her class. This told her about the different ways in which students learn most easily.

She was aware that, if she was going to change her teaching style, she would need to design the learning environment accordingly. Active learning required a different context and a different set of rules. She first established some ground rules with students. Then she changed the seating arrangements so that students could form groups of four and five. She designed different activities for each group. She did not randomly design activities. She asked students what topics and subject areas they have difficulty with. She designed activities around these topics.

She immediately saw that the energy level increased in the classroom and students seemed to be taking more responsibility. However, she saw another problem: parents were not promoting active learning at home and were 'killing their creativity'. She invited all the parents to a meeting in which she talked about active learning and multiple intelligences. The parents were very impressed and started to pay more attention to their children's learning. Then she did something that was very unusual in her situation; she wrote a report every week to parents about what their children had done in school and how the parents could support them in a way that would consolidate their learning.

She had been trying to influence her colleagues in the school, but something happened that accelerated this process. Her students' parents talked to other parents, who, in turn talked to their children's teacher. They then began to ask her about what she had been doing. She responded enthusiastically and shared her activities with other teachers.

For Nerin, it had not been easy to design these activities. In taking the development work forward she needed support from her colleagues. She began to ask them what they were doing and what activities they could suggest. She also realised that she should ask students to help her to design activities. She was surprised to discover just how much students can teach their teacher. She realised that 'I need my students as much as they need me!'

In order for this way of working to become embedded in the school Nerin knew that she had to influence others. She persuaded colleagues who also belonged to her development group to help her create an 'activity room'. Each teacher would describe the activities they have used in their classroom and then place the materials they had used in the activity room. This had a big impact. Colleagues are now going in and out of the activity room and they are now talking more about learning and teaching. In addition, the parents visit the school much more than they used to and they work more co-operatively with their children and their teachers.

Through this project, Nerin learnt that every student is capable of learning. She also demonstrated to herself and to her colleagues that teachers can learn new ways of teaching that effectively engage their students in learning.

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Learning through making radio programmes

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Abstract

Andrew Emms was a senior teacher in a primary school near Potters Bar when he developed the use of radio as a medium for his pupils' learning. In this article he describes how he developed the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), in the form of a radio programme, to enhance the curriculum and support children's learning. He reflects on how his role as a teacher changed in the course of the project.

All the children sat in my classroom as I pressed the green triangular icon on the whiteboard to play the radio show they had created. They sat attentively with signs of quiet excitement and slight embarrassment as they listened to their own voices. We were entertained by quizzes, phone-in shows, an interview with a teacher, an interview with an older child in Year 6 about what to expect at school camp, informative shows about healthy eating and keeping fit, and a quite brilliant play about Medusa. When the last show finished the children all seemed stunned by the quality of their work. One Year 5 boy commented: *That sounded so real, not like something we've done.*

My central aim with this development project was to enhance the learning experiences of children in school. I had begun with a concern about the depth of their learning. The children seemed happy; they behaved well, listened attentively and presented good quality work, but I was not sure how engaged they were with the learning process. Then another issue presented itself: judgements made by Ofsted in a recent inspection had suggested that we were not making enough use of ICT as a tool for learning. Subsequently, the development of ICT across the school became a school improvement focus. As a staff team we also wanted to address the problem of the passive way in which children seemed to be learning. We decided to combine these agendas and work together to see how we could develop the use of ICT to enhance the learning experience.

The development of a radio programme as a tool for learning emerged as a personal priority.

Developing my thinking

In the early stages of this project I took great encouragement from a statement from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). A paragraph in the Handbook for Primary teachers said this.

By providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply knowledge, understanding and skills, the curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and to make a difference for the better. It should give them the opportunity to become creative, innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership to equip them for their lives as workers and citizens.

(QCA, 2000: 11-12)

I knew that my teaching fell short of the vision outlined in this statement and I was sure that we could do more to challenge children to develop their creativity by offering a richer learning experience.

I read widely on the subject of creativity; the term has many interpretations but there seem to be a few common threads. Creativity is about being imaginative and shaping something that is perceived as new. Creativity is an attitude or a way of looking at things rather than a particular activity; anything can be approached in a creative manner. Many creative pursuits result in a valuable product, such as paintings and music, but mostly it is about a creative journey. Integral to the creative process is the ability to take risks and to get things wrong (Fisher, 2004; Craft, Jeffrey and Leibling, 2001).

Another influential idea was Csikszentmihalyi's (1996; 2002) concept of 'flow'. For me, this resonates with an idea used in the context of sport: 'being in the zone'. Both involve a pleasurable experience of feeling focused and alert, while navigating a demanding environment. Although it is possible to experience flow whilst carrying out any activity, there are some activities that are particularly conducive to it such as making music, rock climbing, dancing, sailing and playing chess. All of these activities have rules that 'require the learning of new skills; they set up goals, they provide feedback, they make control possible' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002: 72). Flow activities provide a sense of discovery, transporting

a person to a creative new reality where they demand of themselves higher levels of performance. I thought that involvement in a radio programme might provide my pupils with the experience of flow.

Developing the radio project

My first step was to set up a radio club where a group of children from Year 5 and 6 (9-11 year olds) organised themselves into five production teams that would take responsibility for a daily radio show during the school lunch hour. Although this was primarily a music based show, the children developed a wide range of skills by including interviews, adverts and jingles in their shows.

Having gained this initial experience I wanted both to bring the project into the classroom and to involve my colleagues in the development work. I therefore held a planning meeting with the teaching and support staff in Year 5. We discussed how we might best develop a collaborative radio project which would involve all Year 5 children. We agreed that the children would be asked to make a short contribution to a radio show about any aspect of their learning so far in Year 5. I wanted the children to have as much control over the process as possible rather than feeling that this was just another instance where the teacher was telling them what to do and their role was to simply get on and do it.

The principle of choice is one which had been discussed and explored with colleagues throughout the Potters Bar Primary Learning Network and is echoed elsewhere in this volume (see the story about Elizabeth Edwards and Sophie Gilbert's development work on page 17). It was also highlighted in a research project commissioned by the GTC (General Teaching Council), the conclusions of which included the following.

By being given opportunities to make choices within the learning process pupils can exercise considerable influence and achieve a real sense of being in the driving seat of their own learning.

(MacBeath, Frost and Pedder, 2008: 49)

The children were therefore invited to choose their own groups, choose their own topics and choose how they would present their knowledge through the medium of radio.

Stage 1 – The children take the lead

And so it began. All of the children in Year 5 came into my classroom. I asked for a volunteer to come and help me at the front of the class. I recorded his voice on a digital voice recorder, imported the audio file to ‘Audacity’ (the software we used), together with some background music and a couple of sound effects. I then played the recording back to all the children. The children were excited by this new technology. I explained to them that they were going to be producing a radio show and that they would be in charge of many areas of their work: who they worked with, how they planned their work and the quality of the final product. The children then began their work with evident excitement and enthusiasm.

At the end of the afternoon session all of the children came back into my classroom. I asked them to report on the successes and difficulties they had experienced in the planning stage. Most of the discussion was about the dynamics of the groups they were working in. We decided that we needed to be analytical and weigh up the pros and cons of each idea. We discussed the idea of compromise and ‘give and take’ and how we needed to be able to recognise the best idea, even if it was not one of our own. We were, in essence, getting to the heart of what collaboration meant to them as they worked on their radio projects. I was excited by the degree of active engagement which children were already showing in this project.

Children across Year 5 worked on their radio project every Wednesday afternoon. By the third session, some of the groups were ready to start recording their work. One of the Year 5 classrooms was used as a recording studio, while in the other classroom children were completing their research and writing their scripts. Once the children’s contributions had been recorded, I loaded their MP3 files onto the school network ready for the editing stage. By the end of the sixth session, all of the children had finished their radio shows. Their reaction to hearing their work was exciting and sometimes led to nervous laughter as I described at the start of this article.

As I evaluated the project I had mixed feelings. The children had been very motivated and may well have experienced the flow I was hoping for. Using the radio had clearly enhanced their learning experience. The recording had gone smoothly, although importing music, balancing the volume of the voices against music and adding sound effects was quite challenging. I found myself overloaded with

technical problems from the children at one stage. The children describe this situation well.

Well, we did fine, but when it came to the end trying to decide the music, it went all wrong because we decided one, but the computer... what we tried to do didn't work. Everything went aaaahhh!!

(Year 5 girl)

Unfortunately I was the only person who understood how the software worked which meant that, because the children had to wait until I could intervene, momentum was being lost. There was no time available for this intervention, nor time to help colleagues develop the necessary expertise. I was forced to scale back the project and work with just my own class for the next stage of the project.

Stage 2 – Embedding the project in the curriculum

The children had learned how to write and produce a radio show that they could be proud of. I now wanted to see if they could use their new skills and understanding to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum. I decided that our radio work could support the development of ‘persuasive writing’ in literacy which could be linked with ‘global issues’ as part of our work in geography.

I invited the children to work in smaller groups of their own choosing. I gave them an article about protected species focusing on the plight of the orangutans as a result of deforestation in Malaysia. In the discussion that followed, the children explored the idea that the people who chop down the trees are not solely responsible and we have to think about the responsibility of the people buying the wood. The discussion progressed to the protection of other species such as whales and dolphins. We spoke about related issues such as recycling and eco-tourism. We considered various formations of informal, persuasive language such as: ‘any right thinking person would...’ or ‘only a complete idiot would...’ and ‘the real truth is...’.

Once the children appeared to have understood the persuasive genre and the nature of some of the global issues, I asked the groups to decide on an issue they wanted to address and write a short radio report to inform people about it and argue a point of view persuasively. This first session lasted all morning, concluding with children sharing their plans and mind-maps. They worked with

sustained concentration and stayed on task for most of the morning. At break time, one girl asked me *'do we have to go outside?'* The global issues had really captured their imaginations.

In the second session, the following day, the children worked at turning their research into a script, making sure that they used the examples of informal persuasive language. Once their script was completed and the members of the group were happy with it, they were allowed to record it themselves in preparation for the next session.

I had set aside a morning for the children to complete the second cycle of the project. During this time the children were to import their voice recordings to Audacity – the software programme – edit out any mistakes, import a backing track and adjust the volume of the voices relative to that of the music. I was a little anxious at this stage because the children had found this part particularly difficult during the first cycle of the project. I modelled each step in this process on the interactive whiteboard, inviting children to come and help. The laptops were then distributed and the children started the editing process. After a couple of initial problems with groups not being able to log on to the network, I was heartened to see that the rather chaotic scene from the first cycle was not being repeated. Three children at one computer was not ideal, but each of them could see the screen and, using headphones, each of the children could hear what they were doing. After about 25 minutes of the children working at their computers editing their work it was clear to me that, in most cases, the children were experiencing a state of 'flow'.

It was not the quiet, focused work that my reading about flow suggested; the room was actually quite noisy, the children did not realise how loud their voices were becoming because of the headphones they were wearing, but they were, nonetheless, totally engrossed in what they were doing. Being more familiar with the software, they were able to work more independently, needing less adult support. The feedback was immediate as they played back their work to themselves. Their experience of the first cycle and apparent success here was driving them to improved levels of performance as they gained a greater understanding of persuasive writing and of the software they were using. In each of the groups the children were involved in an activity in which they had been required to learn new skills, set up goals and receive feedback. In

addition, they were certainly in control of the process they were engaged in. This surely was the ‘flow’ discussed earlier.

Reflections on the second cycle

At the end of the second cycle of the project, all of the children in my class completed their ‘emotional timelines’, adding comments to explain why they had placed themselves at a given point on the scale. They had done this at a previous stage and now each child had moved themselves further up towards the smiley face end of the scale. This indicated to me that they had improved perceptions of themselves as learners. Their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997) had been enhanced which has the potential to improve their learning capacity. Their comments illustrated how their engagement with the learning process had developed as this example shows.

I enjoyed the project as I got a bit better at teamwork and I really enjoyed doing the plays. At first we didn't do so well but eventually we worked it out.

(Year 5 girl)

The question of the extent to which the children were working as a team was crucial. It is clear that we had not yet reached an ideal state but at least it was part of the pupils’ consciousness about the activity as the following comment illustrates.

I enjoyed it but not everyone was working in a team.

(Year 5 boy)

What had I learned?

The principles of project-based learning had guided this project. A key driver of the children’s creativity was their sense of ownership of their learning. It really was up to them what they wanted to do and this had a very positive impact on the end result. Giving control of the process to the children is not without its risks however; I had proceeded on the assumption that all of the children could cope with the pressure of responsibility, but some could not and they needed support and a nudge in the right direction.

As a result of this project the children in Year 5 had developed a much better understanding of what it means to work collaboratively. They came to understand that collaboration goes beyond merely working with your friends and that it is characterised by communication, listening, choices, decisions, organisation and

compromise. Written communication skills were also developed as the children researched and wrote scripts for their shows. At the heart of the project was the development of ICT skills that were key in recording and editing their shows.

In the last five years we have seen the bringing together of many new technologies, accessible through the modern classroom computer. It is imperative that, as a profession, we explore ways in which these technologies can be used to enhance the teaching and learning process. I have seen, through my development work, that dialogue and communication are essential to learning. It has also become clear to me that, in order to develop practice, we need to engage in and contribute to a climate of reflection, building a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) which involves both children and teachers in critically examining what we do in the classroom. Dialogue and communication are also the key to curriculum development. When I reflect on the progress of my development work I realise that I was somewhat naïve in assuming that more colleagues would want to become involved and that the project would rapidly gain momentum. This did not happen as I hoped it would. If curriculum development and innovation are to become successfully embedded, dialogue and collective reflection are essential. The challenge is to build the collaborative force necessary for the sustained development of practice.

Throughout this project my role as a teacher gradually changed. At the start of the project I stood at the front of the class and gathered the pupils' views, recording them on the board; visibly leading the process. As the project developed, it felt more comfortable to take a step back. In essence, I moved from being the 'teacher as expert' and towards 'the teacher as facilitator' (Fisher, 2004). I had created an environment in which children could think for themselves and engage with their learning in a new way.

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Building professional knowledge across schools

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Abstract

Matt Roberts is a member of the senior leadership team in a secondary school; he collaborated with Amanda Roberts, who at that time worked as an independent consultant, to pilot a Professional Learning Visits programme across Stevenage schools. The point of the project was to discover how a collaborative inter-school visits programme could be used to build professional knowledge across school boundaries and promote collaboration between schools. Here they explore some of the lessons learned from the pilot programme, focusing in particular on knowledge transfer. The article charts the development of an appropriate model to support a developmental inter-school visits programme.

Our project focused on inter-school collaboration in Stevenage, a relatively disadvantaged town in Hertfordshire (Stevenage Borough Council, 2006). Over the years, central government policies have led to a competitive environment in which each of the 7 secondary schools would struggle to out-perform the others. Then, an opportunity to foster collaboration was seized upon by headteachers when they signed up to the 'Stevenage 14-19 Partnership'. Such partnerships were established in order to broaden the range of specialist courses that could be offered to post-16 students (DfES, 2005), but the Stevenage heads adopted a more radical approach by appointing a full-time coordinator who would facilitate a wide range of initiatives.

Barnwell School, where Matt Roberts was an Assistant Headteacher, had participated in the 'Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning' project (MacBeath *et al.*, 2007), one of the outcomes of which was a 'toolkit' – practical tools to support professional and organisational learning. The Headteacher of Barnwell at that time proposed an

initiative in which the schools participating in the 14-19 Partnership would use the Carpe Vitam project tools to support school development in a collaborative way. In the first phase of the project, schools carried out a Leadership for Learning survey; data outputs were produced and these were discussed within schools. Teachers were also supported in exploring innovative practice through illuminative vignettes. It became clear that, in the Stevenage schools, we could point to a wide range of innovative practice already going on. The question of how we could enable colleagues to explore and further develop innovative practice across Stevenage then arose. An inter-school visits programme was suggested as a useful vehicle for sharing what teachers know. The 14-19 Partnership development group asked Amanda Roberts⁶, one of the co-ordinators of the HertsCam Network at that time, to work with Matt to help him develop the proposed Professional Learning Visits programme.

Developing a model for the pilot visits programme

The aim of the pilot project was to discover ways in which a collaborative visits programme could be used to build professional knowledge across school boundaries. We wanted to avoid this being mere ‘educational tourism’; rather, we wanted it to bring together individuals from different environments:

to engage in purposeful and sustained developmental activity ... co-constructing new knowledge together.

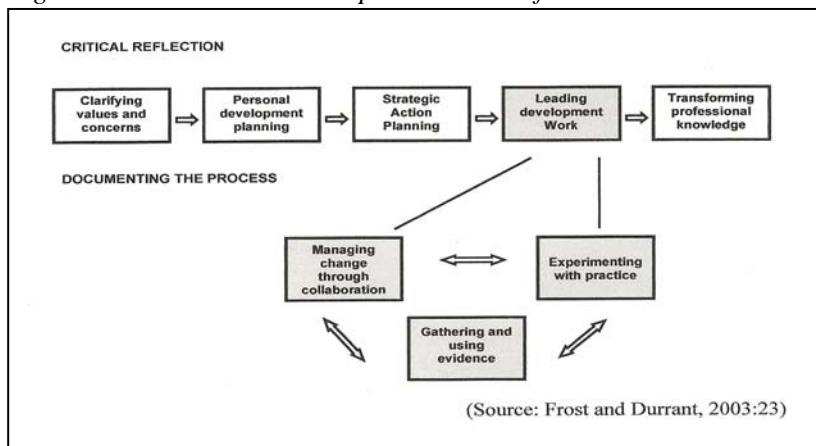
(NCSL, 2006: 3)

The extent to which the pilot visits programme could be termed ‘sustained developmental activity’ was questionable, but we were keen to harness the potential power of a combination of collaboration and the spirit of inquiry which we had experienced in our work with the HertsCam Network.

Frost and Durrant’s (2003) model of teacher-led development work has been used for some years to underpin the HertsCam teachers’ development work in their schools. In this model, leadership and inquiry are integrated as strategies for managing change (Frost and Roberts, 2004).

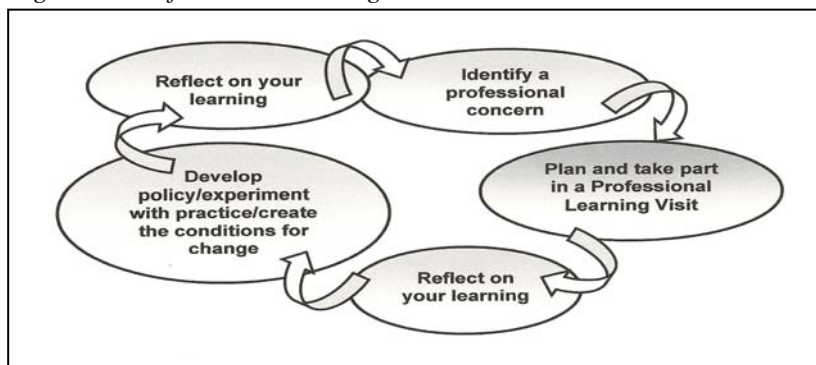
⁶ There is no family connection

Figure 1: Teacher-led development work: a framework



This teacher-led development work model resonated with the Professional Learning Visits process through its emphasis on a professional concern as a starting point and its expectation of action arising from inquiry-led collaboration. We therefore developed a framework which constructed the visits as small-scale inquiries (see Figure 2, below). This framework was intended to underline the continuous nature of professional learning, the need for reflection to ‘de-code’ what had been seen/learned and the need for action in order to transform an aspect of practice.

Figure 2: Professional learning visits – Model 1



This model was used to guide both the teachers’ visits and our own evaluation of the programme. Initially, visits took place across two schools, Barnwell and Barclay schools. A theme of common interest to both schools was agreed: the introduction of a vertical tutoring and house system. A team of teachers from each school visited their

colleagues to learn about policy and practice in relation to this theme. Supporting material was produced to help teachers both to reveal their own practices and to reflect on the practices of others.

Evaluating the pilot programme

The pilot programme was evaluated through teacher interviews and written feedback, with a view to informing the development of a full inter-school visits programme. Evaluation of the pilot programme revealed issues relating both to our thinking and to our practice. These are discussed below.

Organisational conditions

In planning a programme of inter-school visits, it is clear that the institutional and organisational context has to be conducive to the development of collaboration. A positive climate is essential. The Stevenage headteachers' proactive response to cross-town collaboration was a key factor in the success of the inter-school visit programme. Stevenage headteachers have long viewed collaboration as a significant lever in raising standards.

The partnership brings together the town's six 11-19 community schools ... North Hertfordshire College, Lonsdale and the Valley special schools and the Stevenage Education Support Centre. All these centres are working together ... to transform the educational culture in the town and, through collaboration at 14+, to broaden and enhance opportunities and learning pathways for all young people.

(Stevenage 14-19 Partnership website)

The headteachers' view of the potentially transformative power of collaboration on the life chances of young people is clear here. It appeared from teacher interviews that this view had become a shared one amongst teachers within schools as the comments below illustrate.

In years gone by we were all competing against one another and you would never have spoken to the enemy. And the good ideas we had you wouldn't share. It's daft being anything other than co-operative.

(Teacher 1, School A)

I didn't feel any sense of competition. I wasn't going there to compete ... that wasn't my mindset at all. It was a genuine curiosity about how they operated this particular system.

(Teacher 2, School B)

The teachers participating in the pilot project also appeared to be united by a shared moral purpose. They saw improving learning and teaching, and thus better providing for the needs of students in both schools, as more important than the temptations of inter-school competition. They viewed the visits as a way of supporting the improvement of learning and teaching through professional partnership.

A partnership between professionals so that they can learn from each other and share good practice.

(Teacher 2, School A)

Share knowledge: see what someone doing my job at another school does, share good practice.

(Teacher 3, School B)

The pilot visits programme was designed both to provide a powerful, active learning experience for Stevenage teachers and to support the building of professional knowledge across the town. We were clear that we needed to structure the programme so that it provided support not only for teachers to learn from one another, but also to use that learning to make a difference (Fullan, 1999). Realising these aims proved challenging. It was difficult for the senior staff organising the programme to find appropriate times during the school day for teachers to visit their partner school. It was similarly challenging for the teachers to find time to reflect together on what they had learned, to record this in an appropriate medium for a wider audience and to find a forum in their home school for sharing their insights.

A significant advantage for the Stevenage initiative was the pre-existing Teacher Led Development Work programme and other enquiry based initiatives. The synergy between these programmes was helpful in ensuring a reasonable level of acceptance of the idea. Related to this point is the way that teachers' investigations and reflection is nourished by the provision of appropriate tools to support the process. In Stevenage these tools were already familiar and accessible.

Another organisational factor is the extent to which senior leadership members can arrange for time to be earmarked for the visit team teachers to meet together on their return to their home school. This is an essential part of the process that allows members of the visit team to make sense of what they have seen and learned. They also

need to process this and represent it for the benefit of their colleagues.

Following the visits, the teachers needed access to an appropriate forum for communication so that their learning could be shared more widely within their home school. This is part and parcel of an enabling school culture in which such teacher-generated knowledge is valued and used. The impact of what has been learned through the visits is amplified if the teachers are provided with support to produce outcomes that might include such things as: tools for use in the classroom, curriculum materials, a set of principles for practice or a procedure for further inquiry. Such materials can convey the new knowledge and help to ensure that it becomes embedded in the practice of the school.

Learning through dialogue

All of the teachers who took part in a Professional Learning Visit commented on the power of dialogue between teachers to promote learning.

We were able to have a natural conversation ... I think that's the best sort of conversation ... you think of questions so it is quite productive.

(Teacher 2, School A)

When someone comes and they are new and they are looking at something objectively they ask questions that make you reflect. It's about perception isn't it? You don't always see things in the way in which a stranger might see them. You are so used to working through processes that are familiar to you that you don't question them.

(Teacher 2, School B)

Teachers varied in their views about where the learning took place. Some felt they learned more in their role as visitors whereas others found the role of host to be an equally instructive one.

Teachers were positive about the tools provided to help them to make their practice and their tacit knowledge visible to others (Polanyi, 1966). This allowed their professional dialogue to be enriched by experience. A thinking routine, developed by David Perkins (2003) and his team at Harvard University, was offered to help teachers to consider the practice they were seeing and hearing about. The routine can be summarised as follows:

Connect: How are the ideas and information connected to what you know already?

Extend: What new ideas did you get that extend your thinking in new directions?

Challenge: What is still challenging or confusing for you? What questions or puzzles have been raised?

The thinking routine was used to challenge the belief that good practice from one school can be transferred to another without teacher engagement. Instead, teachers were encouraged to actively connect with what they were seeing, to engage in the purposeful and sustained development activity discussed above, with the potential to use what they were learning to transform knowledge. The routine was used by some teachers although some found other ways to order their thinking.

Materials provided to support teachers in recording what they had learned in a formal way were generally less well received. Knowledge building requires knowledge management however – the recording, storing, developing and using of what has been learned is key to this process (Hargreaves, 1999). We therefore persevered with the challenge of supporting teachers in recording their learning by producing a revised support pack.

Transferring professional knowledge through shared leadership

The development of the Professional Learning Visits programme can be linked to the development of distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). When introducing the programme to teachers, we did not make this aspect adequately explicit. Despite the acknowledged structural potential for sharing and indeed for leadership, the teachers did not share what they had learned widely within their schools. Informal discussion took place amongst those who had taken part in the visits but the formal, strategic discussions necessary for transformation did not take place. The teachers generally saw the reasons for this omission as being operational rather than strategic or political.

We have talked about some of the things that we brought back but we haven't had any formal conversations ... we could have had a whole meeting where the three of us fed back to the other people who do

our role in the school. Maybe we could have done something like that as a follow up.

(Teacher 1, School B)

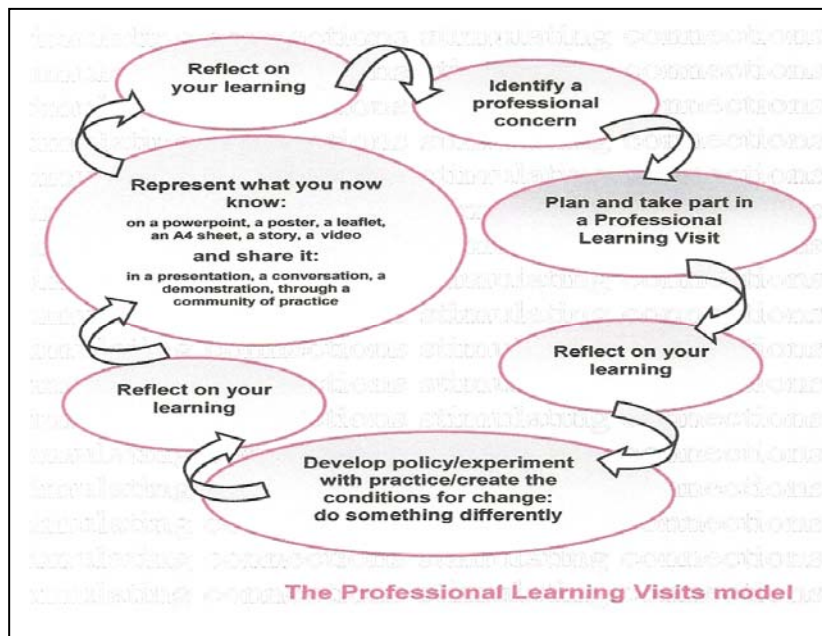
We felt that this explanation gave only a partial picture however and that we need to re-examine what we understood by knowledge management. We were challenged by Arian Ward's often quoted definition:

It's not about creating an encyclopedia that captures everything that anybody ever knew. Rather, it's about keeping track of those who know the recipe, and nurturing the culture and the technology that will get them talking.

(Ward in Collison and Parcell, 2004: 16)

We reflected on how we had nurtured cultures and technologies for connection in the pilot visits programme. We had provided teachers with proformas and templates to help them to capture what they were learning. We had not, however, attempted to influence the underlying culture in which we expected these tools to be effective. We needed to reconceptualise knowledge as organic, requiring appropriate conditions in which to flourish, we produced a revised Professional Visits model, Figure 3 below.

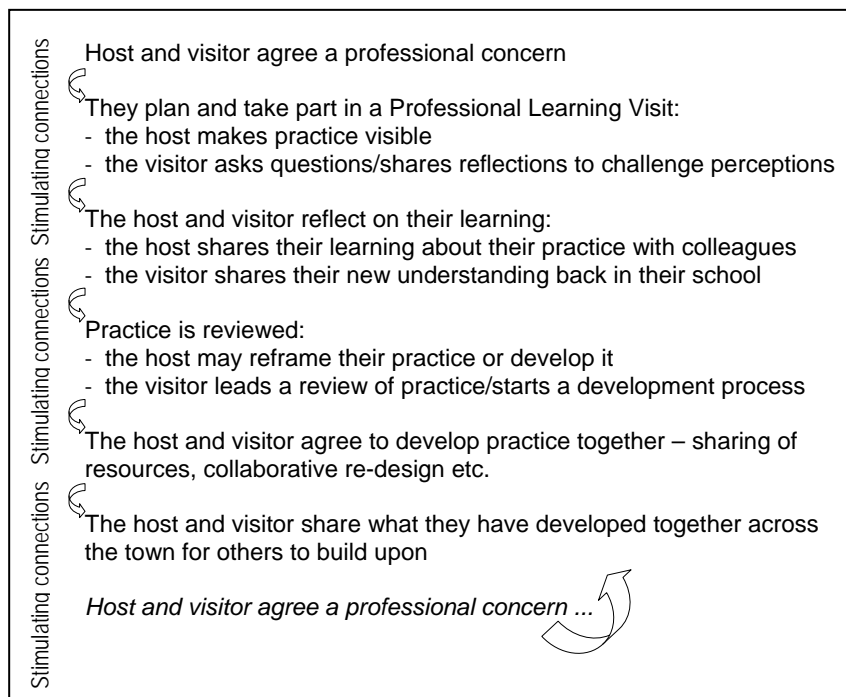
Figure 3: Professional learning visits – Model 2



This model emphasises the need both to do something differently as a result of professional learning and to represent new knowledge so that it can be shared with others. The significance of connections between individuals is underlined through appearance of the words *stimulating connections* (Collison and Parcell, 2004) repeated in the background of the diagram. This model signifies the importance of a culture of connectivity which provides appropriate conditions for effective and enduring steps towards knowledge management. It has the potential to support learning at all levels: teacher, school and system.

On further reflection we realised that this model still did not make adequately explicit the active participation needed from both host and visitor. We were also keen to reflect the next step in the development of the visits programme – that of continuing the joint working after the initial visit has ended and of sharing developing professional knowledge across the town. These aspirations are reflected in further revisions to the Professional Learning Visits model in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Professional learning visits – Model 3



The challenge of knowledge creation and transfer is perhaps the most crucial for headteachers to consider. A model of inter-school visits that merely informs and develops the individuals taking part is poor value for money so it is important to understand the different types of knowledge that could be harvested and disseminated. Then we need to prepare routines that support the sharing of the learning that arises from the visits programme. Essentially this is a matter of developing knowledge management systems that will effectively harvest what is known but not shared. This echoes the challenge presented by David Hargreaves in his influential paper 'The Knowledge Creating School' (Hargreaves, 1999).

Conclusion

The initial aim of the Professional Learning Visits pilot programme was to provide a powerful, active learning experience for Stevenage teachers. Teachers and senior leaders were generous in giving us their time to reflect on what they had learned from the pilot project and how the visits programme might be improved. Through this process, we were able to identify principles and practice which might be used to develop a full visits programme across Stevenage schools. These are expressed above through a narrative of our own learning and discussion of the salient messages for school leaders and practitioners.

Teachers took a clear leadership role in sharing their knowledge with their visit partner. However, this pilot programme has suggested that we need to pay adequate attention to supporting teachers in using, building on and sharing their new knowledge more widely. It is becoming clear that a stand-alone, cross-school visits programme is not part of this sustainable future. We need instead to mine the potential of inter-school visits to enrich and extend the learning of existing groups of teachers, currently working in isolation in individual schools. At the conclusion of the pilot project in Stevenage it was agreed that schools would use professional learning visits to enhance the knowledge of members of 'Learning and Teaching' and 'Research and Development' groups already operating within schools. Teachers would be offered the opportunity to visit colleagues in the town who have expertise in their area of interest, at a time which fits their individual development agenda.

We remain a long way from capturing the professional knowledge held by Stevenage teachers collectively, but we are at least clear about the potential for a knowledge building approach to inter-school

collaboration. Future plans need to take account of the cost of knowledge creation and transfer. Professional knowledge is often called 'sticky information' (Von Hippel, 1994) or 'sticky knowledge' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) not only because it is often tacit knowledge but also because of the challenge that arises because of values that underpin professional practice. It is not possible simply to disseminate professional knowledge. Such knowledge has to be subject to inquiry, discussion and reflection in order that it can be transposed to a context which may seem similar but in actuality may be quite different. Schools need to invest in supporting the movement and growth of such knowledge. The vision for collaboration across Stevenage, given by the Headteachers on the Stevenage Partnership website, talks of working together to transform the educational culture of the town. The inter-school visits programme could perhaps provide a vehicle for debate and reflection which would support such cultural transformation.

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Developing emotional literacy in an infant school

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Abstract

Corinne Harris is a teacher at an infants school in Hastings, a coastal town in the south east of England. She was a member of a group supported by Judy Durrant of Canterbury Christ Church University in which teachers were pursuing a masters in School Development. In this article Corrine describes her leadership of the process of developing strategies to improve emotional literacy and emotional intelligence. These activities helped both the pupils and the staff to deal with the emotional dimensions of their learning.

I have been teaching infants for seven years at my school in Hastings. The school is a popular one, although it is situated in an area of high social and economic deprivation, with a greater than average number of pupils being eligible for free school meals. Many children start school with standards below those expected for their age, especially in language, communication, personal and social skills. I had noticed that many of the more vulnerable children in my Year 2 class had very low self-esteem, lacked confidence and were prone to violent outbursts after unhappy playtimes. Other children were exhibiting signs of stress by continually sucking their clothing. I recognised the link between emotional health and academic achievement. Writers such as Goleman (1998) and McCarthy and Park (1998) show how emotional and mental wellbeing can raise motivation, increase concentration and improve problem solving and learning skills.

As a small staff, we have good knowledge of children and their families and the school ethos is a caring one. The school provides a secure and supportive environment for pupils, parents and staff, but I felt that we could do more to address our young children's emotional needs, help them to cope and develop their resilience. All of this would help them to be successful throughout their schooling and beyond.

It might be assumed that emotional wellbeing is entirely attributable to factors in the home and family, but my reading told me that there is a scope for intervention at school by focusing on the concepts of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy and how we can help children to develop these. Goleman describes emotional intelligence as follows.

(It is) ... the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.

(Goleman, 1998: 317)

Goleman stresses that emotional intelligence is not innate but can be taught. This view is also promoted by MacGilchrist and colleagues (2004) who argue that a school needs to value and cultivate its emotional intelligence in order to be effective.

I resolved to initiate a development project that would affect other classes as well as my own; one that would influence my colleagues and perhaps contribute to changing the whole school. In this article I explain how I introduced new classroom techniques, enlisted the support of a play therapist, raised the level of professional discourse and initiated staff development. In leading this work, I also undertook an emotional journey of my own.

Raising awareness of social and emotional aspects of learning

A school training day was already planned to review the SEAL⁷ materials provided as part of the Primary National Strategy and to support the 'Every Child Matters' policy (DfES, 2007a; 2007b). At school we were rather bemused by the government's intervention as we felt this had always been at the heart of our infant school agenda. We have always maintained that, in order for children to be successful learners, they need first of all to feel emotionally secure.

The aim of the SEAL programme is to reassert the importance of the emotions particularly with regard to learning and with regard to the goal of working towards a more inclusive society. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were highly valued, but some felt that emotional literacy is just as important and that we need to embrace the concept of educating the 'whole child'. Sharp (2001) had argued

⁷ SEAL – Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

that we have been in urgent need of a national agenda to promote and nurture our emotional literacy and raise self-esteem. By promoting emotional learning we will make a difference by enabling children to achieve their best and make a greater contribution to society.

During the training day we were asked to complete Sharp's questionnaire (2001) to see how emotionally literate we felt we were as an organisation. The outcome was contentious and led me to question my own emotional literacy. After a discussion with the school SENCO⁸ I decided to attend a 'nurture group forum' with her. This is a weekly group in which we aim to generate a feeling of well being by encouraging positive self-esteem, exploring feelings, following rules, learning self-responsibility and how to relax. The impact of that startled me because, after carrying out several simple exercises, I saw colleagues become very emotional with some even breaking down in tears. This led to an in-depth discussion about how our professional working lives, when combined with home issues, prove so hectic and stressful that we need to unburden ourselves. However we are often unable to do this to the detriment of our own emotional needs. The same applies to our children. I wondered how I might address this through the introduction of play therapy. I wanted to come to understand more about teachers' views on these issues. I decided to explore day-to-day experience through the analysis of 'critical incidents'.

Using critical incidents: collaborative reflection for school development

Incidents are not in themselves critical, but are rendered critical by questioning and analysis in order to interpret the significance of an event (Tripp, 1993). By instigating the discussion of critical incidents in staff meetings, I was able to discover, for example, that all colleagues felt unhappy about unsupervised football at playtimes, as it led to some children becoming highly stressed and they returned to the classroom in no mood to learn and were sometimes disruptive. By raising awareness and highlighting this problem, I and my colleagues were able to review the situation. With the headteacher's support, we agreed on a simple strategy to solve the problem; an extra member of staff was given a specific role to supervise the football area at playtime and teach the children co-operation and taking turns. This had immediate impact on the children's behaviour

⁸ SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

and also supported their emotional development. The change in pupils was immediately apparent. One child amazed me by saying what a good playtime he had had, where previously he had always returned in a bad mood.

We also learned that another catalyst for disruptive behaviour was the length of the lunch break which was almost seventy minutes. We realised that this is simply too long for children with emotional difficulties. After many discussions, we agreed that a play worker should be employed to work with our more vulnerable children at lunch times. This was carried out in our newly constructed 'Rainbow Room' which is a colourful, safe haven indoors where they are taught games to play, discuss friendship issues and solve resolutions to conflict, all of which develops their emotional literacy and allows them to cope better with school life.

The process of raising issues, discussion and problem solving amongst our small group of staff was initially undertaken informally after school with no obligation to participate. I was eager to tell people what I was finding out, I discovered that they recognised the same patterns of behaviour and the concerns became shared. Through this reflective process we increased our knowledge of how to give greater emotional support to our children.

I was conscious in introducing critical incident analysis that I needed to avoid colleagues feeling threatened but instead offer them a way to learn more about supporting the development of children's emotional wellbeing. Soon, colleagues began to bring their own incidents for discussion. Eventually we formalised this process by committing our incidents to paper and bringing them along to staff meetings, supporting each other in reflecting upon our experiences and thus gaining more from them. This proved so valuable and successful that the headteacher incorporated the idea into the next year's school development plan. I initiated a critical incident log, which allowed the school staff to learn collaboratively and improve teaching and learning. It became increasingly clear to us that reflection is essential for a professional approach to practice. Supported by the school structure, these discussions were more powerful; they shaped the organisational culture by overcoming tensions, opening up dialogue around difficult issues and initiating whole school change through the strategies we devised and implemented.

As well as this work across the school I wanted to address the particular needs of the most vulnerable children in my class. The introduction of play therapy proved valuable not only for these children but also for staff.

Play therapy to address children's emotional needs

I initiated the use of play therapy to promote the emotional and social learning of four children in my Year 2 class, who I felt were not emotionally stable enough to make the most of educational opportunities being offered to them. With the Headteacher's agreement I asked a play therapist to carry out some child-centred play activities with this small group. She agreed that I could work alongside her and then report to the rest of the staff, so that we might be able to offer therapeutic play activities in school. Working with an external expert was an invaluable part of my development work; it extended my own understanding of emotional intelligence.

The aim of play therapy is to help children who have a poor self-image and difficulties in making relationships (Jennings, 1999). If these children are able to develop essential 'give and take' skills, through play activities, they can channel aggression constructively and become more able to manage relationships with other children. Therapists agree that children who are cared for, respected and listened to are in a good state to learn. Emotionally unstable children either act out or withdraw, leading to social and friendship difficulties and further blockages to learning.

Before we could start our programme we informed parents and obtained written permission to proceed and, in an initial session, we recorded details of the children's emotional state prior to the sessions.

We carried out four play therapy sessions over a period of four weeks, which involved using puppets, art activities, story and role play. In the final session we planned to evaluate the work and review the children's emotional state following the course of sessions. We chose the staffroom for the sessions because it would be safe, secure and undisturbed. At the start it was imperative to help the children to distinguish the sessions from normal school activities. We also explained the boundaries of time and stated our only two rules: we do not hurt ourselves or each other and we do not deliberately break things.

Child centred play gives the children control, it is *their* play and should help them to express, play out and explore situations. It may or may not lead to problem solving, but their ideas drive it and their ‘voice’ must be heard. Our task was to provide the opportunity for the children to become aware of their feelings. We needed to encourage and support, but the play would always be led by the child. We told the children we were there to play but they would need to tell us what they wanted us to do.

After every session I discussed with the play therapist how the children had reacted and wrote up our notes, feeding into future sessions. This proved to be very valuable as I learnt so much from my highly trained colleague about the children’s reactions and how best to deal with them in the classroom. The children were asked to give their views and explain how they had enjoyed the sessions. They felt they were free to explore their own thoughts, which I think led them to feel empowered, improved their self-esteem and helped them to form friendships more easily. The evidence from my observations suggests that, by addressing the emotional needs of our pupils, we enable them to learn strategies to deal with their own feelings so they can cope with school life stresses independently.

Unlocking the emotional dimensions of our own work

It became clear as the development work progressed that I also needed to take into account the emotional situation and needs of staff. Goleman (1998) maintains that staff who feel what they do is worthwhile and are valued will be more motivated and will have a greater impact on professional performance and on the organisation. He also argues that people differ in their capacity to understand and express emotions, but there are underlying skills that help us to do this; these can be learnt and can continue to develop as we learn from our experiences.

I began to realise that emotional literacy is important for all of us, as we need to recognise our emotions and understand them to become effective learners. We need to manage our emotions in order to develop positive relationships and be able to express our feelings appropriately so as to develop as well rounded people, capable of helping ourselves and therefore better able to help others. I therefore talked with my colleagues about how we could talk about our own emotional needs.

After discussions with the headteacher and colleagues I asked the play therapist to provide ‘in house’ support for those who would like it, similar to the activities with the children. She thought it was an excellent idea and hosted her next workshop at our school. I managed to coax three other members of staff into attending with me. This workshop and subsequent ones were very emotionally charged. We discussed how little professional support we have to unburden ourselves, while implementing government initiatives that require us to provide significant emotional support to children. We considered that we had already developed quite an effective mutual support system between our small, close staff but that here we were also exploring deeper issues.

It is not appropriate to explore here all the issues that arose out of those workshops. It is sufficient to say that the support we received and provided for each other raised our morale, helped to improve our emotional literacy and increase our emotional intelligence.

Towards an emotionally literate school

Considering the changes that have taken place, it is clear that there have been benefits for children, staff and our school as a whole and I have also recognised changes in myself.

Progress for children

Children have taken some steps in learning to reduce their stress at playtimes and lunchtimes. This type of development does not have a neat conclusion, and I realise I have only just begun to understand the complexities of the emotional dimension of learning, but this progress did convince us of the need to ensure that emotional literacy has to be considered in our curriculum planning. As a result, I have ensured that therapeutic play activities led by teachers have continued for the four children already involved and I am putting the techniques into practice more generally. Through this, and the introduction of ‘feeling fans’ based on the SEAL materials, children have learnt to identify and name their feelings and suggest ways to overcome problems independently or with peer support.

Since the outcomes of this initial development work are not easily measurable, there is a danger that they will be seen as insignificant in the light of the value placed on numerical performance data. However, the prominence of the Every Child Matters agenda gives the development of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy greater political credibility. Moreover, it has been suggested that

emotional literacy is becoming increasingly important as schools search for new behaviour strategies for children and try to reduce staff stress (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2004). We must continue to make these emotional dimensions more explicit in response to the growing consensus that all children can benefit from a structured whole curriculum framework for teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills (Webster, 2006).

Progress for staff

When teachers become self-conscious, collaborative and critical about their teaching, they develop more power over their professional lives and extend their teaching repertoire (Hopkins, 2002). Through critical incidents we had the chance to reflect on our practice and reinvigorate our passion for teaching. The play therapy workshops helped a number of us to become more aware of our emotional needs and to realise the need to provide more mutual support in this respect.

Day (2004) reminds us that teaching is emotional work and suggests that, where teachers feel tired, have low morale and are exhausted by paperwork, this needs to be addressed. If not, their passion may well begin to fade. Nurturing of emotional literacy in school can therefore benefit staff as well as pupils, particularly in terms of the need to feel valued and empowered (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2004). Emotional intelligence is not simply a 'buzz word'; it is an essential capacity. It is important that we address our own emotional needs and develop the emotional literacy that enables us to become more effective in nurturing children's emotional intelligence.

Progress as a school

In order to lead effective school change, an atmosphere of value and trust must be in place. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that trust has an impressive effect on school improvement. Our new headteacher stated her firm belief in us as a team and was supportive of my leadership and the developing agenda around emotional intelligence. In an increasingly emotionally literate climate such as ours, I believe that all staff can work together to promote and maintain the school vision and ethos. We have developed practical strategies for developing children's emotional intelligence and providing emotional support throughout the school. This has provided a vehicle for the creation of a more collaborative, open and supportive professional environment. By enabling everyone to have

a voice in this way, we are taking steps towards becoming a more emotionally intelligent school (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 2004).

My own journey

Leading this development work proved to be a very emotional process. I believe that I have become a more emotionally balanced individual, able to cope better with the stresses at work and at home. This has enabled me in turn to become a better teacher, able to address the emotional needs of my pupils more effectively. I have also experienced personally the empowerment of having my views and ideas supported and recognised. For example, I contributed an article for a university journal (Pepper, 2006) which gave me greater self-esteem and confidence in my research and development work and in leading change in my school.

The workshops in particular had an enormous impact on me. I admitted that, in trying hard to support others, I do not spend enough time looking after myself. Always independent, I confessed to my colleagues that I found it very hard to ask others for help, seeing this as a sign of weakness, but have now realised that recognising my needs is part of my own emotional intelligence and development. This has had a huge impact on my personal life as well as professionally. Increased self-esteem has strengthened my commitment to professional learning, so that I am better able to help children to remove the barriers to their learning and capture the excitement and power of learning for themselves.

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Evaluating teacher-led development work in a secondary school

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Abstract

Val Hill is a member of a senior leadership team at a secondary school. She was responsible for the development of teaching and learning throughout the school and chose to address this through the cultivation of teacher leadership. She brought the HertsCam Teacher Led Development Work programme into her school and in this article she provides an account of her evaluation of this. Her analysis focuses on the extent to which this strategy supports the growth of a wider professional learning community and sustainable school improvement through the provision of opportunities for leadership at all levels.

In December 2006 Ofsted judged our school as ‘good’ with some ‘outstanding features’ and as having ‘the capacity to improve further’. As a rapidly improving school, this capacity and how to build it is of primary importance. Merely looking at operational changes would lead to limited improvement. What was needed was a cultural change which encouraged each member of the learning community to see themselves as both leaders and learners.

I was interested in Hargreaves’ (1999) view that without social capital, intellectual capital cannot flourish. According to a social capital audit carried out by an external researcher, our school had strong social networks but lacked pedagogical networks (Birch, 2007). It seemed to me that we needed a critical mass of teachers who saw themselves as empowered agents of change in order to create and share knowledge, but also to develop the learning community itself. Through my study into the nature of learning communities I came to see that what was required was improvement of the systems which supports teachers and the fostering of teacher leadership at all levels: what Senge (1994) refers to as the ‘deep learning’ required for organisational change. Only through achieving a conceptual shift in teachers’ belief in themselves as continuing learners, reflective practitioners and leaders would they

become empowered as individuals and bring sustainable benefits throughout the school.

I sought to establish a range of opportunities for staff by building organisational structures which allow freedom to engage in professional development activities which motivate and engage people as individuals. One of these structures was the setting up of a Teacher Led Development Work group (TLDW) in conjunction with the HertsCam Network - a partnership between the University of Cambridge, the Hertfordshire local authority and individual schools.

The concept of TLDW has been developed over many years and is well documented (e.g. Frost, 2003; Frost and Durrant, 2002; Frost and Durrant, 2003a, 2003b). Through the TLDW programme I hoped to provide a forum for teachers to develop as both leaders and learners. More than this, my aim was that the participants would become influential members of the learning community, bringing many more colleagues into a learning conversation that developed them all, thereby building the school's capacity to become 'outstanding'.

After two years, I undertook to evaluate the TLDW programme and shape its development in my school. I wanted to focus on how teacher-led development work changes participants' teaching and learning practice, develops their capacity to exercise leadership and to engage in networking within and beyond school.

TLDW in action

The teachers who joined our first TLDW group did not initially see their work as a means of improving their own leadership or contributing to the wider learning community. The realisation that they had a significant role to play in the creation and transfer of professional knowledge grew as they became increasingly passionate about their work. Now it became a matter of restructuring systems in the school so that regular forums could be found for this sharing of developing knowledge.

I used the newly established Learning Forums to provide this opportunity. Learning Forums were whole staff meetings with a specific focus on teaching and learning. They were intended to break away from the old model of staff sitting in the hall being told how to teach. Instead we wanted to give staff the opportunity to shape and contribute to the meetings and the TLDW participants did just that.

The evaluations from those first workshop sessions commented on the value of sharing practical strategies, being impressed by the passion and commitment of their peers and reflecting on their own practice. In February 2007 TLDW members presented their work at a joint training day for the Bishops Stortford consortium of schools. Having presented at this event, participants were more confident in volunteering to present at the subsequent HertsCam Network Event to an audience of other TLDW participants from across the County.

These events helped the participants to evaluate the impact of their leadership, which in Durrant's (2004) view is the most powerful feature in driving school improvement. Over time, I began to see direct evidence of development in the pedagogical networks between staff – a key objective of the project. A TLDW participant reflected on this new-found capacity.

I've started having ad-hoc conversations supporting other staff. I've always had a licence to do it but TLDW has made me realise a lot of things. I'm more willing to engage with other staff about pedagogical issues. I've got a lot of ideas, not all mine, that I can share. I know my strengths now.

(Teacher 1)

Another participant, saw a distinct difference in her role pre and post TLDW participation.

I'm quite excited. Instead of just teaching day-in and day-out I get a chance to make an impact. I know as a teacher you make a difference with the students, but with this you get to see the difference you've made.

(Teacher 9)

I began to see increasing evidence that where teachers are given the support and opportunities to lead they do so very effectively and with relish. MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) identify the vital indicator of a school's capacity for improvement as its increased learning ability. When a school becomes a learning organisation, its professional culture becomes the knowledge carrier, allowing improvement to be sustained despite changes of staff or political contexts. It seemed to me that this is exactly what TLDW and the Learning Forums were providing the conditions for.

I wanted to explore the impact of the TLDW programme in more detail. I have organised my reflections under four themes: 'Impact

on teaching and learning’, ‘Impact on school culture’, ‘Impact on individuals’ and ‘Impact on leadership capacity’.

Impact on teaching and learning

TLDW participants all felt that the process had developed their teaching practice. This was an important outcome on the way to developing the learning community as it began to raise the profile of pedagogical discussion between teachers. For some the effect was liberating.

It's made me reflect and change the way I practice things...it gave me scope to try different things and not be worried if they didn't work because it was OK for it not to work.

(Teacher 11)

I like it because it's one idea that I've been allowed to think about so it's given me time to really work it out and think it through.

(Teacher 9)

The use of the verb ‘allowed’ is significant here, revealing the perception of prescription and lack of autonomy. Instead we were facilitating collaboration and autonomy in professional development and moving away from the prescriptive transmission mode of much current provision (Campbell, 2003).

The increased confidence to experiment was verified by line managers and colleagues who saw it as contributing to the improved practice of the participants and their faculty teams. One Head of Faculty, for example, attributed students’ achievement of A and B examination grades to the development work of one TLDW participant who had influenced the practice of other team members as well as himself. This is where TLDW’s strength lies; it is rooted in teachers’ primary concerns about raising student achievement.

Surprisingly quickly the impact moved beyond participants to the wider school community as a result of the structured opportunities to share and lead development work with colleagues.

I can take that back to the faculty, which I have done, and trigger everyone else doing it, so I know it will become part of the scheme of work now and a really important part

(Teacher 3)

At a time when the national agenda is focused on re-introducing creativity into the curriculum it was heartening to hear the following comment by a participant.

I've really loved doing what I've been doing, so it's had a huge impact on my teaching...this has almost given me the licence to put creativity in without feeling guilty.

(Teacher 5)

Importantly, there was also evidence of this teacher-learning impacting on students by creating the conditions for more powerful communication about the nature of learning.

Now we've got a bit of a dialogue going on. It's nice that they're a lot more confident to put their own thoughts down and not worry what someone else is going to think... The language of 'I don't know' has changed much more now to 'who can help' so it's less negative.

(Teacher 4)

Cultivating a learning community among teachers has brought about a shift of culture for students too by modelling life-long learning.

Impact on school culture

To make the benefits of TLDW sustainable, my aim was for it to influence the whole school community and begin to shape its culture. In the first cohort this took time to develop as individuals got to grips with their development work as a piece of personal CPD⁹. With the second cohort, there was an immediate expectation of wider impact. All this activity however was not proof of impact. I was pleased therefore when my interviews suggested that there had been marked changes in the way staff interact and about what.

There's been a cultural shift...when I hear teachers talking to one another now it's to do with classroom practice or things that they've learned. The school gets loads of intellectual capital from it.

(Headteacher)

Learning in schools – for teachers as well as students – is often seen as an individualised process which is separate from other activities; it is assessed out of context and collaboration is discouraged. Wenger (1998) suggests it is small wonder, given these conditions, that

⁹ CPD – Continuing professional development

improvement is limited. Here I was beginning to see evidence that this solitary approach was changing.

I think there has been a shift towards people talking about pedagogy. I think the TLDW is a fantastic forum for those conversations to happen. I know I've had more conversations with people outside my department because of it. To actually have the time to focus on this is really important – massively.

(Teacher 3)

This evidence suggests a clear increase in pedagogical networking in the school, fuelled by a sense of ownership.

...it was mine and I was able to share it with other people. It made you feel really empowered. Possibly because I was enthusiastic about what I was telling them they were enthusiastic as well. I liked it.

(Teacher 7)

This positive impact on other staff can be further seen in the recent Learning Forum which was led by TLDW participants and other teachers within the school. TLDW participants had led activities in a previous Learning Forum and this appeared to have set an expectation that high quality professional development can be led by teachers. The key seems to be giving people choice and tapping into their areas of interest.

People have volunteered [to lead workshops]. It hasn't been you saying "you're in TLDW so you must deliver" which makes a difference. It's totally left it up to us. Are we passionate about it? Do we feel that it's something we want to share? And there were loads of people, weren't there? That's really good.

(Teacher 10)

This suggests that the work is not contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994) but owned by all. Staff gave feedback on the 'impressive work' their colleagues had undertaken and commented on their confidence. Those doing the leading also reflected on the benefits.

The excellent questions and answers from staff really made me think about what I was doing and how to take it forward. It wasn't anywhere near as scary teaching adults as I thought it would be. I wasn't an expert in the field that I was leading, but I could still utilise my skills from life and work to produce a meaningful

experience that seemed to engage the staff. This was empowering and I feel much more confident to do it again.

(Teacher 14)

These statements reinforced for me the value of sharing the work beyond the group. There was a common view that the work initiated by TLDW members and then taken up by others through the Learning Forums had given a direction to the staff as a learning community and had gone some way towards supporting a breaking down of some 'balkanisation' (Hargreaves, 1992) within the school, with people valuing the opportunities the new structures gave to work outside of their traditional areas.

Participants began to realise the power of their own work and the effect the changes were having on the wider professional community.

I think attitudes of teachers have changed and there's more of a learning language culture within the school... staff are very open – they always have been – but it's exposing people to new stuff, isn't it?

(Teacher 9)

There was a time, not so long ago, when I worked quietly and independently on my own, but during this last year so many ideas have come to me through listening to and communicating with colleagues from many different backgrounds

(Teacher 2)

Nor has the impact been confined to the wider learning community of the school. There is growing evidence of impact at consortium level and within the HertsCam community.

I really enjoy it because there are people doing the same as you with the same mind-set...I think they're really important because you're networking outside the school and hopefully the impact is then outside the school as well.

(Teacher 5)

This wider impact is what will bring sustainability to the work.

Impact on individuals

Two of the major effects of the TLDW work on the participants have been the increase of professional confidence and sense of personal value in the organisation. Part of this is attributable to the warm

reception their work has received from colleagues. Teachers value opportunities to engage in work which is grounded, pertinent and apposite. They also value that which they can contribute to and feel they belong to, and being able to exercise their individual agency enables teachers to maximise their own learning (Lambert, 1998; Cordingley, 2002).

Even if I'm not on the TLDW next year I still want to know who's speaking at the HertsCam events and go along because I really have enjoyed that. It's good to know you're part of a much bigger network. I know they show you that slide of all the groups but that's just a picture on a PowerPoint. It doesn't mean anything until you see people in a room.

(Teacher 3)

A sense of challenge has been described by several respondents. For many the TLDW experience has been stimulating and powerful, showing its impact as part of a knowledge creating community.

I feel it's changed me so much more than having a one day course here and there with limited impact when you get back into the department because there's limited opportunities to share the information. For me, for my learning and progression, TLDW's right at the top there.

(Teacher 6)

Impact on leadership capacity

Leadership has to come from all teachers in order to effect sustainable improvement (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2006; Fullan, 2001). All TLDW participants had engaged in some form of new leadership activity. For some it was at faculty level.

We're very good at this school in being interested in each other, aren't we? Because they [the department] have been asking, it's given me a feeling that I'm doing something, not just being in the classroom. I'm actually helping other colleagues, which helps everyone move on and it's really nice.

(Teacher 12)

While others felt a more profound change in their personal influence as a leader.

On the leadership side of things I've changed hugely. I'm more confident to say when things are good practice and when we need to change things and how we're going to change them. So it's not just

me changing them. It's working with others to change something that isn't quite right.

(Teacher 4)

It forces you to put your head above the parapet and say "I'm here, this is what I'm doing, come and listen because I actually think it's really good." It gives you the lever to be able to do that.

(Teacher 7)

These comments speak of teachers who have a real investment in their own learning community, who see themselves as agents of change for improvement and who have the confidence to speak out even when this goes against received wisdom. A newly qualified teacher sums up the purpose of TLDW.

When I started this project I did not feel that I was a leader. My opinion of my importance within the teaching profession was limited before embarking on this. I now feel that it is unimportant which role you have; if you are creating good practice and providing insight within a school you are a leader.

(Teacher 8)

If teachers feel supported in this way, then school improvement will surely follow. It seems clear that where teachers share learning it leads to the generation of a school-wide culture that makes teacher leadership an expectation. This reclaiming of school leadership from the individual to the collective, is what Harris and Muijs (2004) suggest offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action.

Conclusion

The improvements that TLDW has contributed to our school include a more collaborative climate, a greater awareness of shared purpose, a greater willingness – through improved opportunities – to take the initiative and risks and a more concerted focus on professional development. We are becoming more of a learning organisation (Silins and Mulford, 2004). In order to create a learning community that encourages and values thinking, then it is vital that teachers themselves have experience of such a community (Smith and Sutherland, 2003) and this is what TLDW helps provide. The next stage in this development of the learning community is encouraging the participants more overtly to evaluate their leadership of school improvement which, as Durrant (2004) argues, should be the main focus of teachers' professional activity and learning, rather than an eventual response or hoped for outcome.

Through this evaluation I have gained a deeper insight into the nature of teacher leadership: it is not something one can pay lip-service to nor is it homogeneous. It is challenging, exciting and it lifts the lid on schools' capacity. I have seen teachers as individuals begin to reframe their belief systems and practices which has been tremendously exciting but, as Mitchell and Sackney argue, it is when this reframing becomes a school-wide phenomenon that it is truly transformative (2000). I have seen its beginnings, and it is this continued transformation that I am committed to in my future work. I am reminded of the Japanese proverb, *none of us is as smart as all of us*.

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