

Editors' Introduction

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In any special issue of an academic journal it would be expected that the articles included would have something in common, a shared focus perhaps. It is certainly true of this special issue, but the contributors – authors and editors - are also connected in other ways. We are all practitioners who are connected by our membership of a network in which there is a shared commitment to non-positional teacher leadership. This statement raises questions in relation to the identity of practitioners, the nature of the network and the idea of non-positional teacher leadership which are discussed below.

Practitioners and Practice

In academic discourse the term *practitioner* is often used to refer to school teachers, thereby distinguishing them from academicians, but in our view, this obscures the concept of practice. All of the contributors to this special issue are practitioners; in some cases their practice focuses on their teaching in schools and their leadership of development work; in some cases, their practice includes the facilitation of teacher leadership. Common sense discourse about practice is often muddled by a rather unhelpful distinction between theory and practice which suggests that the former flourishes mainly in the academy and the latter is located in the 'real world' of schools. Some writers in the field of teacher education have sought to move beyond the supposed theory-practice divide by proposing the value of *phronesis*, an Ancient Greek term usually translated as 'practical wisdom' (Furman, 2015). This could be explained as the capacity for intelligent judgement, not only about the efficacy of particular actions, but also about the ethical dimension of them.

Although Schon did not draw specifically on Aristotelian terms in *The Reflective Practitioner*, his concept of reflecting-in-action resonates with the idea of *phronesis* and offers a useful way of understanding how professional practice is developed (Schon, 1983). However, the idea of the *reflective practitioner*, in common usage at least, seems to reflect a rather individualistic perspective where the focus is on each teacher striving to improve their own practice. This self-evaluation approach is also manifest in ideas such as *the teacher as researcher* (Stenhouse, 1975) and *action research* (Adelman, 1993). The latter has the potential for criticality and transformation, but, especially within the context of masters degree programmes and the like, the tendency is for teachers' projects to remain focused on their own practice as individual action researchers. In this special issue we are concerned with the need for organisational and system learning. This is addressed to some extent by the idea of 'double loop learning' (Argyris & Schon, 1974; 1978) in which the practitioner moves beyond repeated attempts to apply current know-how and adopts instead a critical perspective, questioning accepted practice and searching for alternative solutions. This is closer to our conceptualisation

of teacher leadership, but in our view there are two additional requirements - *scholarship* and *leadership*.

The idea of scholarship tends to be associated with the academy rather than the professions, but the values and behaviours associated with scholarship are essential to the process of innovation. In Boyer's seminal report (1990) he identifies dimensions of scholarship - discovery, integration and application – which illuminate how the development of professional practice can be enriched by a critical perspective drawing on relevant literatures. McIntyre offers the notion of 'practical theorising' in which teachers draw on a range of theoretical and research-based literature (McIntyre, 1995). This is relevant here although he assumes that it is of most value in the context of initial teacher education. A shared value position in our network, promoted especially through our masters programme, is that the development of practice needs to be informed by our reading and critical analysis (Frost, Ball, Hill & Lightfoot, 2018).

The idea of leadership is also essential in the sense that to enable double-loop learning to lead to the kind of change which becomes embedded in the life of the school as an institution, we need to factor in strategic thinking and the skills of change management. Change, or learning, at the level of the individual easily evaporates in institutional settings and dissemination is a vain hope when professional knowledge is so 'sticky' (Von Hippel, 1994). The message from Georgiades and Philimore (1975) that 'organisations, like dragons, eat hero innovators for breakfast', we learned many years ago.

The Nature of Our Network

The HertsCam Network grew out of a partnership formed in the 1990s between the University of Cambridge and the Hertfordshire local education authority. Over time it developed its own identity and a much clearer articulation of purpose which is to facilitate teacher leadership. It eventually became an independent entity, the operation and governance of which is now entirely in the hands of the schools and teachers it serves. Teacher leadership is facilitated through programmes such as the Teacher Led Development Work (TLDW) programme and the MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning. The teachers and other education practitioners who join these programmes are invited to participate in a networking programme which includes at least six events annually, all hosted by schools. The activities that take place at these events include:

- teachers putting up posters depicting for example a project design or a professional challenge and inviting others to engage in dialogue with them by posing questions, offering advice or contributing comparable experiences;
- teachers facilitating workshops focused on a particular development project or a more general theme, again enabling dialogue and debate within the group through the use of a discussion tool; and
- teachers making a plenary presentation as an inspirational opener to the event.

What all these have in common is the sharing of narratives which invariably include an account of the origin of a professional concern and consultation with colleagues, an explanation of the design of a developmental process, an account of the unfolding of that process and an assessment of the impact on those involved.

Networking has long been recognised as being a key component of 'new professionalism' (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996; McLaughlin, 1997), but why is networking of the kind we describe here so important? The concept of community of practice is perhaps illuminative, based as it is on a social theory of learning in which the elements of meaning, identity, belonging and practice are key (Wenger, 1998). When networking is successful, participants' constructions of their professional identity are enhanced and strengthened through the interaction between like-minded peers. As other writers on teacher leadership have noted (e.g. Osmond-Johnson, 2017), belonging to a network can build social capital, which is arguably a necessary foundation for the dialogue and the sharing of ideas; this builds what David Hargreaves called 'intellectual capital' (Hargreaves, 2001) and what has more recently been referred to as 'professional capital' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In HertsCam, our approach to networking rests on a slightly different conceptualisation; we use the term *knowledge building* which owes something to the work of Scardamalia and Bereiter (2003), although they tend to focus on school classrooms. Nevertheless, the principles and values promoted in their theory are applicable to our situation; for example, that knowledge is advanced by working on others' problems and 'discourse as collaborative problem solving rather than as argumentation' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006: 99). We embraced the idea of knowledge building because we wanted to avoid the assumption that networking exists to transfer or transmit knowledge. For us, knowledge is discernible in the flow of discourse and in practice (Frost, 2012) rather than a specification that can be officially validated.

Good networking experiences are characterised by warm greetings and informal conversation over refreshments and in between the organised activities listed above. Such experiences are deliberately scaffolded in order to foster a sense of belonging and community which strengthens social capital. Connections and friendships are renewed, relationships are deepened, thus the conditions that favour dialogue, critical friendship (Costa & Kallick, 1993; MacBeath & Jardine, 1998) and knowledge building are re-established.

Each network event constitutes a forum in which teachers both facilitate and inspire each other. The narratives they share provoke and facilitate discussion which is not only a means of knowledge building, but crucially a source of inspiration; in other words, they help to spread the virus of moral purpose (Fullan, 2001). Narratives focusing on the leadership of a process designed to develop an aspect of practice invariably start with a matter of social justice. In this special issue for example, we have Samantha Squires' story about a project to build resilience in young learners from disadvantaged backgrounds; we also have Hanan Ramahi's story about building teachers' agency in occupied Palestine. When such stories are told in networking scenarios the sense of moral purpose is infectious; they inspire others to focus on the social justice issues arising in their own practice.

The commitment to pursue matters of social justice and the ability to do so is strengthened by belonging to, and actively participating in, the network because this promotes collective self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) offered the concepts of self-efficacy and collective efficacy as:

a group's shared belief in the conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment. (Bandura, 1997, p. 477)

There seems to be variation in the literature concerning the usage of the terms *collective efficacy* (Derrington & Angelle, 2013) and *collective self-efficacy* (Krammer, Gastager, Paleczek, Gastager-Klicpera & Rossman, 2018). In any case, we want to argue that collective self-efficacy is a matter of shared beliefs and we know that it flourishes when teachers remind each other that they are capable of leading change. The feeling that 'we are the sort of people who can do this sort of thing' is clearly discernible at network events.

The knowledge building referred to above is not left to chance. The informal side of networking creates conducive conditions, but the core activities in HertsCam Network Events depend on structured facilitation. Participants' narratives are the starting points for discussion so, in preparing to lead a workshop, the individual will design a discussion activity which will enable other teachers in the room to respond to the narrative, explore the issues and contribute their own experiences and perspectives. Such activities will take many forms, but what they have in common is the selection or design of a tool to provide structure and focus for reflection and dialogue. An example would be when, at a Network Event, a teacher led a workshop in which she had prepared some sheets of paper cut out in the shape of a padlock and some sheets cut out in the shape of a key. She had gleaned this idea from the Evaluators' Cookbook (McCabe & Horsley, 2008). On each of the lock shaped sheets she had written a brief outline of a leadership challenge she was facing in her project. She asked participants to discuss these and use the key shaped sheets to record their suggestions about how to improve the design of the project in order to overcome the leadership challenges.

Non-Positional Teacher Leadership

The term non-positional teacher leadership was coined (Frost, 2011) in order to clearly distinguish the HertsCam approach from that which assumes the selection and appointment of individuals to posts of responsibility either carrying the title of Teacher Leader or an administrative post such as Head of Department. The term 'non-positional teacher leadership' refers to a set of assumptions, beliefs and values, central to which is the conviction that any teacher or other educational practitioner can be enabled to exercise leadership, whether or not they occupy a formal position in the organisational structure of the school. It does not denote a particular way to exercise leadership; rather, we suggest that it is only distinctive in that it implies that any teacher or education practitioner should not only be entitled to exercise leadership but should also be enabled to develop their capacity to do so. In our 2014 book - *Transforming Education Through Teacher Leadership* - we said this about our approach to teacher leadership:

...(it) does not assume that leadership is linked with positions in the organisational hierarchy of the school. Instead it recognises the potential of all teachers to exercise leadership as part of their role as a teacher. We believe that all teachers and education practitioners have some leadership capacity. After all, leadership is a dimension of being human. In HertsCam and the wider International Teacher Leadership (ITL) network, we argue that it should be seen as an essential part of teachers' professionalism. (Hill, 2014, p. 74)

This inclusive approach is illustrated by the inclusion in this special issue of articles by Ben Garcia who is a teacher of English who also happens to occupy a senior administrative role in his school and another by Jack Woosey, who is a newly qualified science teacher. They have quite different levels of experience and seniority but they share the challenge of leading change to improve students' learning.

In the 2014 book we offered a theory about teacher professionalism and educational transformation that was explicated through teachers' narratives and accounts of their leadership practice (Frost, 2014). The theory of non-positional teacher leadership is illustrated in the diagram below.



Figure 1. Diagram depicting non-positional teacher leadership

Facilitation. The diagram includes the idea of facilitation which we suggest is under-theorised in the literature. It sits alongside theories such as those dealing with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), adult learning (Lindeman, 1926), transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991) and learning through reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985), but the practice of facilitation itself stands in need of some conceptual work. Some applied research has focused on the idea, for example, in Poekert's (2011) article 'The pedagogy of facilitation', which focuses on a teacher inquiry programme. In that article there are some indications about facilitators in a teacher inquiry programme making the teachers feel comfortable, offering encouragement, creating the conditions for self-directed learning and helping teachers with their data analysis using a coaching approach. Although the summative statement: *Inquiry facilitation is a matter of maintaining a balance between scaffolding and pushing teachers at appropriate points to maximize their learning* (Poekert, 2011: 35) is helpful, it suggests that there is more conceptual work to be done. Within HertsCam, we share a working definition as follows:

Facilitation is a form of teaching in which the facilitator seeks to empower others through the use of tools to enable them to reflect on their experience and engage in deliberative dialogue in order to clarify values, envision desirable futures and plan strategic action from which leadership flows. (HertsCam Internal Document)

It is interesting that facilitation is most commonly associated with adult learning – some would even use the term *androgogy* (Knowles, 1980) - but we would argue that this is redundant because the concept of facilitation is simply part of teaching, provided that this is conceptualised as enabling learning to take place. In Sarah Lightfoot's recent doctoral research, it was noted that the participants in her *Making a difference in the Early Years* programme commented that the teacher-led development work approach was very similar to good pedagogical practice in the early childhood sector (Lightfoot, 2019).

Practice development through projects. Enabling teachers and other educators, whether or not they hold any formal position of responsibility, to exercise leadership is a key challenge. In HertsCam we have used the idea of a *development project* to address this. We define development work as:

strategic, focused and deliberate action intended to bring about improvements in professional practice. It takes the form of collaborative processes featuring activities such as consultation, negotiation, reflection, self-evaluation and deliberation which take place in planned sequence.

Some may want to apply the label informal teacher leadership to this. Danielson for example writing in the ASCD journal in the US says this:

Informal teacher leaders ... emerge spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks. Instead of being selected, they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through their expertise and practice. (Danielson, 2007, p. 1)

This does not adequately describe the HertsCam approach where participants are not selected or appointed, but neither do we rely on spontaneous emergence. In fact, teachers and other education workers are invited and encouraged to join our programmes. Having elected to participate, they are enabled to engage in strategic planning and to manage a process of change according to an agreed action plan.

It is this through designing and leading projects based on their own professional concerns that participants feel a strong sense of empowerment and voice. Their human agency is enhanced. Workshop activities enable participants to reflect on their values and plan how to contribute to the development of practice in their schools. This tends to have the effect of mobilising and refreshing their sense of moral purpose. It puts their professionalism on a new level. They experience themselves being taken seriously by colleagues and find themselves becoming influential. The teachers who lead development projects might have a special role of responsibility or they may have no position at all. What participants have in common is that they act strategically in a deliberate and planned way to achieve goals that they have clarified in consultation with colleagues.

Using the idea of the development project is advantageous for several reasons. First, it is focussed on a particular problem or aspect of practice which makes it manageable, but more importantly releases the enthusiasm and commitment of the individual. They tend to have a powerful sense of ownership of the focus for the project because it has arisen from reflections on their values and concerns (Hill, 2014). Second, it is time-bound which again contributes to its manageability. Projects are designed to extend to a single academic year although the process of practice development is likely to continue for much longer. Third, a project allows for certification. In the case of the TLDW programme, the participant registers for a one-year programme, collects evidence in the form of a portfolio which is submitted and assessed to allow the award of the Certificate in Teacher Leadership. In the case of the MEd programme, participants register for two years and all the assignments are based on preparation for and the leadership of a development project and lead to the award of a masters degree from our partner university, the University of Hertfordshire.

Extended professionalism. A central assumption within HertsCam is that it is both desirable and possible to enable teachers to extend their professionalism to include a strong leadership dimension. The idea of extended professionalism put forward by Hoyle in the 1970s was about reaching beyond your own classroom to the wider world of ideas, research and professional development courses (Hoyle, 1974). We have built on Hoyle's specification to emphasise the dimensions of moral purpose and of course the exercise of leadership. This is discussed in more detail in a recent article by David Frost in the International Journal of Teacher Leadership (Frost, 2018). For our purposes here it is perhaps sufficient to say that, in HertsCam we are committed to promoting a mode of professionalism that is maximally agential.

Transformation, knowledge and advocacy. The diagram above (Figure 1) indicates that teachers' leadership of development projects, together with the accompanying enhancement of their professionalism, leads to educational transformation. This may take the form of changes in practice but also in professional knowledge.

In the case of the former, changes in practice may be quite small scale, limited to one or two classrooms, but often they affect the whole school. Facilitators draw on a range of tools to help participants extend their vision of the potential impact of their projects and to monitor and evaluate them as they unfold. For example, we use a tool called 'Planning for Impact' which has four headings: Impact on pupils / Impact on teachers / Impact on the school as an organisation / Impact beyond the school. To take the first of these as an example, it is divided into three sub-categories: Improved attainment, Improved disposition and Improved meta-cognition. Each one of these is broken down into a number of indicators and prompt questions to aid reflection. The categories of impact are drawn from a research project conducted many years ago (Frost & Durrant, 2002) and they are kept under review. The use of such tools helps facilitators to challenge teachers and enable them to broaden their own expectations for their development work.

Every participant in a HertsCam programme is encouraged to consider how the impact of their development work can be enhanced through building collaboration with colleagues so that the improvements in practice become embedded in the routines of school life. Related to that is the challenge of ensuring legacy of the project. This involves planning ahead to try to ensure the development work continues to grow but also to try to ensure that it becomes part of the *institutional memory* (Sergiovanni, 1992). Strategies for the latter include the production of handbooks for colleagues, catalogues of teaching materials, evaluation reports and the like.

One of the most powerful tools for extending the impact of development work and for ensuring legacy is the narrative arising from the development project. This might be in an oral form shared in various networking scenarios, but it might also be published. This special issue includes narrative accounts of both teachers' development projects and activists who have developed programmes to support teacher leadership. In HertsCam we have always endeavoured to publish such narratives as chapters in edited books such as *Transforming Education Through Teacher Leadership* (Frost, 2014), *Empowering teachers as agents of change: a non-positional approach to teacher leadership* (Frost, 2017) and *Teachers as Agents of Change: a masters programme taught by teachers* (Frost, Ball, Hill & Lightfoot, 2018). We have also published teachers' stories in others forms such as a journal, newsletters and posts on our website. It might be supposed that the rationale for publishing these stories is to disseminate information about classroom practice, but actually a more important reason is to advocate for an alternative approach to educational reform. The negative impact of the neoliberal approach to reform which continues to dominate the policy discourse has been well documented and subject to critique. The analysis offered by Evers and Kneyber (2016) includes the well-respected academic voices of Stephen Ball, Gert Biesta, Judith Sachs, Ann Lieberman and many more, in constructing a vision of what they term a 'flipped system'. According to HertsCam's constitution as a charitable enterprise, we have a responsibility to promote teacher leadership as a means to enhance teacher professionalism and the improvement of learning opportunities in schools and education systems. We therefore see our publications and contributions to conferences as opportunities for advocacy.

At the beginning of this piece, we said that we write as practitioners. We do not claim to base our knowledge on research; rather, it is fuelled by reflection on experience of practical endeavour informed by dialogue and critical scholarship. This is not to suggest that research-based knowledge is invalid or unhelpful (although it can sometimes be both of these), it is just that our common background in education leads to a set of values which form the foundation for our collaboration. Our professional experience, together with our critical scholarship fuels the search for ways to empower each other as agents of change. It also underpins our advocacy.

The International Teacher Leadership Initiative

One of the ways in which we have been able to engage in advocacy for teacher leadership is through the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative. Following a number of enquiries from colleagues in other countries, HertsCam launched the ITL initiative. The first meeting took place over several days in late 2008 and involved potential partners from a number of European countries including Croatia, Portugal, Greece and Turkey. A representative from the Open Society Institute based in Belgrade – Gordana Miljevic - also attended, which led to the involvement of colleagues from countries in the Western Balkans such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia and many more. In addition, financial help from OSF enabled us to form partnerships with colleagues in 14 other countries to build programmes to support

teacher leadership (Frost, 2011). Later, we were able to extend the ITL network to Palestine, Egypt and Kazakhstan and most recently Morocco.

In this special issue, the articles by Amina Eltemamy and Gulmira Qanay et al. both draw attention to the potential hazards of what is often referred to as 'policy borrowing' (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). This was a focus for discussion in the early stages of the ITL initiative and one that was subject to scrutiny in three recent doctoral studies (Ramahi, 2017; Eltemamy, 2017; Qanay, 2019). The concern at the outset of each of these doctoral studies was the extent to which an approach developed in England could be transposed to the cultural contexts of Egypt, Palestine and Kazakhstan. The tools and techniques had to be translated but also adapted to make a better fit with the local milieu. Whenever innovations are disseminated and deployed in different cultural contexts there is bound to be a tension between adaptation and fidelity (Castro, Barerra & Martinez, 2004). In HertsCam we were keen to preserve the integrity of our approach so have adopted a policy of only sharing our tools and materials where there is an established dialogue with partners and a formal legal agreement specifying the responsibilities of parties to the agreement.

We have included nine articles here which is a greater number than is the custom in this journal. As editors, our aim was to include as many voices as possible and represent as fully as possible the range of activities associated with the HertsCam / ITL networks. As indicated earlier, we have included authors who are senior figures in their schools and some who are relatively new to the profession. We have included two articles focusing on development work in secondary schools (Garcia; Woosey & Miles), one article focusing on development work in a primary school (Squires, Ball & Herbert), one focusing on a trio of projects in a special school (Dillon, Freeman & Shipp) and one focussing on the development of provision in the early childhood sector (Smith, Campkin & Parker). Three of the articles included focus on programmes of support for non-positional teacher leadership in countries other than the UK (Eltemamy; Ramahi; Qanay et al.). In one case the article draws on experience and research in several countries in the Western Balkans and Central Asia (Teleshaliyev et al.).

Most of the authors in this special issue are not accustomed to writing for publication, so the nature of the editorial and reviewing processes was crucial. As editors, we were committed to enabling the voices of our contributors to be heard; we wanted to amplify them and maximise the defensibility of their arguments. It was therefore important to enhance textual clarity and ensure that these stories and ideas were related to, and illuminated by, published research and commentary. Reviewers also contributed to the improvement of the articles through constructive comments. We are happy to say that these processes were in harmony with values and principles such as collaboration, mutuality and collective knowledge building, which are promoted and defended in our network. It has therefore been a very satisfying process to edit this special issue of the International Journal of Teacher Leadership.

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