

SUPPORT FOR TEACHER EFFICACY, VOICE AND LEADERSHIP.EI

Doc.1

Research commissioned from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education by Education International

This document sets out in more detail the proposal presented in an initial paper agreed by the Education International Research Institute Board in June. That paper highlighted the importance of teacher organisations enhancing the confidence, professional knowledge and self-efficacy of their members and supporting them in rebutting the idea that only a small number of exceptional teachers are suited for leadership in their schools.

Focus of the study

The study draws on a range of recent research on teachers' self-efficacy and confidence as well as the conceptual work already undertaken within the International Teacher Leadership project.

Collaborative professional cultures within schools, within which teachers are confident in their own knowledge and capacity has, the Education International believes, a number of important and positive impacts.

The essence of distributed leadership is that it gives teachers the responsibility for leading in particular areas of pedagogy, development of the curriculum and in responding to the social, emotional and wellbeing needs of pupils, unlocks innovative and untapped potential in teachers. In doing so it increases the capacity of schools to meet the needs of pupils and to enhance educational achievement.

Such distributed leadership also enhances the collective capacity of schools and provides time and capacity for the principal and his or her senior management team who can work with and take an overview of the successes and developmental needs of schools.

Distributed leadership shifts principals and their senior teams away from micro-management of staff and towards providing developmental support for staff in classrooms. Distributed leadership should be as liberating for principals as it is for staff. Teacher confidence and self-efficacy is based on their ownership of pedagogy and pupil evaluation and the curriculum and, above all, it is predicated on a climate of trust between the formal and designated school leadership of schools and teachers in the classroom.

Bascia et al. (2010) in an unpublished paper, cite the review of 'teacher efficacy' research conducted by Ken Leithwood.

What teachers actually do in their schools and classrooms depends on how teachers perceive and respond to their working conditions.

Leithwood et al., p.8 (2006)

Leithwood's review identifies; 'Eight specific internal states pertaining to teachers: sense of individual professional efficacy; collective professional efficacy; job satisfaction;

organisational commitment; level of stress and burn-out; morale; engagement in school or profession and pedagogical content knowledge' (Leithwood, 2006:14). His list of 'internal states' fundamentally relates to the core concerns of teacher organisations. The effectiveness of teacher leadership depends fundamentally on the creation of optimum conditions for the achievement of these 'states'.

Ben Levin, of the University of Toronto, identifies a direct connection between strong teacher organisations and the success of educational systems.

A lot of education rhetoric these days includes mention of the supposedly negative impact of teacher unions on reform. For a few commentators, eliminating union opposition is one of the most essential, or even the most single, most important component in creating improvement, while for many others it is part of the package.

But here's an interesting observation. Virtually all the top-performing countries on international education measures have strong teacher unions, including Finland, Korea, Japan, Canada, Australia and others. Of course, such a relationship does not imply causation but it does suggest that there is no necessary conflict between strong teacher unions and good outcomes. Moreover, some countries or sub-national units that took steps to weaken the influence of their unions did not demonstrate any subsequent improvements and, in some cases, such as England, later had to take many measures to improve the situation of teachers to get an adequate supply and, thus, improve student results.

(Levin, 2010)

He argues that teacher organisations can have a key role in creating a knowledge base of professional practice and in finding 'better ways of organising and supporting professional learning, which are supported by teachers' (p.1).

This is supported by Nina Bascia, who has conducted extensive research about the relationship between policy-makers and teacher unions (e.g., Bascia 2009).

In fact, teachers' unions are nearly the only organisations that have paid substantive attention to the actual conditions of teachers' work... (but)... because they are rarely invited to the table to discuss substantive policy issues with educational decision-makers, teachers' organisations can only react after the fact to decisions that have already been made.

These observations provide particularly fertile ground for research on enhancing teacher leadership and providing policy guidance to EI affiliates.

Initial research specification

The initial proposal says that a partnership arrangement with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education would lead to a survey members of EI affiliates using an instrument designed to generate high-level qualitative data.

The purpose of the research would be to produce data about the current environment and existing opportunities for teachers to:

- exercise leadership,
- influence policy,
- shape professional practice, and
- build professional knowledge.

The research would also identify the nature and potential links with teachers in other schools and with the wider community.

The Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) (OECD, 2009) would provide a background for the framing of the study and a policy context for analysis.

Outcomes of the study

The intended outcomes of the study would be to:

- identify the nature and range of opportunities and strategies which support the development and enhancement of teachers' professionalism
- identify the inhibitors and affordances to teacher efficacy, voice and professional development
- identify examples of current breakthrough practice
- explore aspirations and expectations of teachers and their representatives in relation to teacher voice, teachers' professionalism, efficacy and leadership as well as the contribution teachers can make to educational reform and school improvement
- identify strategies to support teacher voice, teachers' professionalism, efficacy and leadership which could be adopted for use in individual countries.
- outline policy recommendations in relation to the above

Framing the recommendations in the context of teacher efficacy and a concept of teacher working conditions would enable the policy recommendations to have a practical relationship with existing developments. The policy recommendations could be directly focused at influencing TALIS 2 by providing an evidential background for teacher leadership. Such recommendations would enhance teacher organisation representations to individual governments on the need to improve teachers' working conditions.

Method for the survey

It is proposed that the survey takes the form of a series of interviews with key representatives of teacher organisations. The interviews could be conducted face-to-face where possible but interviews by telephone or Skype would be the norm. The analysis of the interviews would be supplemented by data from Cambridge University's current International Teacher Leadership project. Key themes and questions are set out in the Appendix.

The themes would be explored in semi-structured, conversational interviews with representatives of teacher organisations who have a clear view of the issues. Audio recordings of the interviews would be collected for analysis but not transcribed.

The sample of countries would be drawn from ResNet and supplemented by a range of developing and developed countries from ResNet and through the Commonwealth Teachers' Group.

A focus group of teachers in each participating country would be convened in order to explore the themes set out above through a discussion activity designed for the purpose.

Time scale

The study will take place between 1 September 2010 and 1 September 2011. An interim report will be submitted to the coordinator of the EI ResNet at the end of February and a draft of the final report will be circulated for comment by the end of July 2011.

Research team

John Bangs will take the lead on the research in collaboration with David Frost. Prof. John MacBeath will act as critical friend providing additional advice and support at intervals. Technical and administrative support will be provided from within LfL resources. John Bangs will join the ITL project team to ensure maximum correspondence between the EI sponsored study and the wider project.

References

Bascia, N and Rottman, C (2010) What's So Important About Teachers' Working Conditions? (unpublished paper). Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)

Bascia, N (2009). Pushing on the Paradigm: Research on teachers' organisations as policy actors. In G Sykes, B Schneider and D Plank (Eds), *Handbook of Educational Policy Research*, pp. 785-792. New York. Routledge

Leithwood, K. (2006) *Teacher Working Conditions That Matter: Evidence for Change*. Toronto: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Levin, B. (2010) *Education This Week – Canadian Edition*. 'Let's Stop Blaming Teacher Unions'. Blog. March 12, 2010

OECD (2009) *The Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS)*

THEMES AND QUESTIONS

General Background Exploration

- The relationship between schools and central government/regional government. The level of school autonomy.
- The extent and scope of schools' autonomy in relation to decisions on the curriculum, staff appointments, budgetary decisions, institutional evaluations, staff evaluations, pupil evaluations and pedagogic practice.
- Views about the legitimacy and appropriateness of the degree of autonomy that schools have in relation to central/regional government.
- Views about the relevance and accuracy of comparative international studies such as the Programme for International Student Assessment, The International Mathematics and Science Survey or the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study in relation to the country in question.
- Whether there is a professional council for teachers and the attitude of teachers towards such a council.
- The aims and strategies of teacher organisations to enhance the professionalism and working conditions of its members through representations to in respect of their links with school principals, local/regional authorities and central government.

Distribution of responsibilities between teachers, principals within schools

- The arrangements for leading schools if the principal is absent.
- The distribution of responsibility for setting the school's educational goals as between teachers, school principals and government agencies.
- The distribution of responsibility for determining the professional development activities of teachers as between teachers, school principals and government agencies.
- The distribution of responsibility for monitoring students' work as between teachers, school principals and government agencies.
- The distribution of responsibility for choosing instructional approaches as between teachers, school principals and government agencies.
- The distribution of responsibility for accountability in relation to attainment of the school's goals as between teachers, school principals and government agencies.
- The distribution of responsibility for carrying out school evaluation by external agencies as between teachers, school principals and government agencies (e.g., external inspectors).

- The distribution of responsibility for identifying the focus of school self-evaluation as between teachers, school principals and government agencies (e.g., external inspectors).
- The relative importance of school self-evaluation and external evaluation.
- The impact of school evaluations on individual teachers.

Teacher evaluation

- The distribution of responsibility for observation of teaching in the classroom, as between teachers, school principals and government agencies (e.g., external inspectors).
- The distribution of responsibility for the evaluation of teacher performance and/or appraisals, as between teachers, school principals and government agencies (e.g., external inspectors).
- The nature and relative importance of different foci for teacher appraisal.
- The nature and relative importance of benefits, impacts and outcomes of teacher appraisal.

Norms of teacher professionalism

- Recognition and understanding of the concept of distributed leadership for schools within the education system.
- Expectations regarding teachers' leadership within their schools in relation to matters such as curriculum, pedagogy, pupil welfare, relations with the local community and parents.
- Expectations concerning the extent to which teachers should be proactive with regard to their own professional development.
- Expectations in relation to teachers having a voice in decision-making.
- Teachers' expectations with regard to the leadership exercised by school principals and administrators.
- The value that Governments appear to place on teachers having high levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence.
- Explicit and recognisable strategies for the future of the teaching profession adopted by local/regional/government and/or education administration.