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Carey Philpott Research Partnership: Research Reports

Issue 1

March 2018



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Welcome to The Carey Philpott Research Partnership Research Reports Issue 1

Welcome to issue 1 of our Carey Philpott Research Partnership Research Reports. Each paper offers insights gained through close-to-practice research in authentic educational settings. They explore dilemmas and opportunities for change at a range of scales and across a range of themes; developing new approaches to continuing professional development and research engagement for teachers, enhancing pupil progress through changing feedback practices and parental engagement and supporting diversity in the teaching profession.

Carey Philpott was Professor of Teacher Education in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University who passed away in January 2017 and who was an advocate for professional learning and evidence-based teaching. The research projects featured here were the first that had been set up just before Carey died, and we are so thrilled to be able to publish them. They represent the hard work of lead researchers based in schools, their partners and their academic links from the university.

Professor Damien Page, Dean of the Carnegie School of Education, “As one of the leading Schools of Education in the country, we’re committed to working with our partners to increase research activity as a means of improving outcomes for young people. The Carey Philpott Fund allows those who work with children and young people to find out what really works and to share that practice across the sector.” We are pleased that we have been able to fund a second cohort of partners working across new themes and in different setting this year.

A summary of each report and relevant contacts details are provided on the following two pages.

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In this issue the first report is an investigation of approaches to CPD in a special school Teaching School setting, and how these can be developed to continue to meet professional challenges in complex settings. This paper is written by Jan Linsley, from John Jamieson School, East SILC (Leeds), who worked with Dr Nick Sutcliffe and then Professor Rachel Lofthouse. You can email Jan on jan.linsley@eastsilc.org, or follow her on twitter at @jan_linsley.

The second report is written by Helen Townsley, (Ryecroft Academy Principal) working closely with Mark Randall (Head of Primary Education), Simon Hayes (Assistant Principal) and Val Snowden (Family Learning and Partnership Coordinator) in The GORSE Academies Trust (TGAT) and focuses on parental engagement through a project evaluating a family learning project. Val Snowden worked with Dr Jo Pike and Dr Doug Martin to develop her research. You can email Val at on valsnowden50@yahoo.co.uk.

The next report is focused on the challenges developing capacity for research informed and evidence based practices within a secondary school. It is written by Steve Riley of Bingley Grammar School, who was supported by Professor Damien Page. You can email Steve on steven.riley@bingleygrammar.org or follow him on twitter at @stv_riley.

Our fourth report is written by Sameena Choudry, founder of EquitableEd and focuses on how BME female leaders are leading the way in secondary education. Sameena was supported by Carnegie School of Education Remi Joseph-Salisbury in this work. You can email Sameena sameenachoudry@gmail.com or follow her and the network on @EquitableEd.

Next the focus is on developing feedback approaches in a group of primary schools to promote pupil progress and reduce teacher workload. This is written by Sally Whittell and John Parkin of Pontefract Academies Trust, who were supported by Dr Tom Dobson. You can email them on JParkin@patrust.org.uk and SHogley@orchardhead.patrust.org.uk.

Our sixth report is written by Claire Dutton and Jack Wardle, both primary teachers, who focus on using observation to support developing effective professional development which goes beyond performance management procedures across the Rose Learning Trust MAT. You can find them on Claire.Dutton@richmond.doncaster.sch.uk and at @D30Claire jack.wardle@woodfield.doncaster.sch.uk and at @MrW_Teacher. Details of the Trust are at www.theroselearningtrust.co.uk and on twitter @TheRoseLearning

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Our final report is written by Shona Crichton of Springwell SEMH Academy, who focuses on parental engagement in the context of social and emotional mental health, and the impact of adopting a 'whole family approach'. Shona can be emailed on s.crichton@springwellacademyleeds.org

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The Carey Philpott Research Partnership is managed by Professor Rachel Lofthouse

To cite reports from this issue please use the following format:

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Please add the hyperlink if you have accessed this online.

Developing Enhanced Specialist CPD as a Teaching School

Lead researcher: Jan Linsley, Teaching School Consultant,

John Jamieson School / East SILC, Leeds

Abstract

Following the publication of Government's White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" in 2010, John Jamieson School, Leeds (The East SILC) was designated as a National Teaching School. Teaching Schools were challenged to "lead the training and professional development of teachers." The school invests heavily in its CPD programme which is available to all staff and, beyond the school, to trainee teachers, the staff of the other Leeds SILCs and to SENCOs in mainstream schools. The school wished to understand "**What difference does the East SILC's CPD programme make?**" and adopted an evaluative approach to this research.

Using Kennedy's (2014) model of the CPD Spectrum the school's approach to Continuing Professional Development would be perhaps best defined as a transmissive training model. There is a planned **focus on refining teaching and learning**, however opportunities to **sustain** and **embed** learning are more serendipitous than planned. There is a desire, to engage in a more sustained manner with professional colleagues and to benefit from peer support to embed learning. The school may wish to consider how it could provide wider opportunities to do and thus increasing the school's capacity for professional autonomy.

The research context; developing enhanced CPD as a Teaching School

Following the publication of Government's White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" in 2010, John Jamieson School, Leeds (The East SILC) was designated as a National Teaching School and the lead school for the Yorkshire Inclusive Teaching School Alliance. All Teaching Schools have annual Key Performance Indicators relating to school improvement, continuing professional & leadership development and initial teacher training. "The Importance of Teaching" challenged Teaching Schools to "lead the training and professional development of teachers."

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In July 2016, the DfE published standards for teachers' professional development which describe "professionals continually developing and supporting each other so that pupils benefit from the best possible teaching." The publication further acknowledges that "professional development is as complex a discipline as the design of high - quality teaching."

John Jamieson School, Leeds (The East SILC) invests heavily in its CPD programme which is available to all staff and, beyond the school, to trainee teachers, the staff of the other Leeds SILCs and to SENCOs in mainstream schools. The CPD itself follows a very recognizable format. The session leaders have expertise to share, they have been given additional facilitation training to enhance their abilities to teach adults and to design and run sessions that are engaging and valued. The CPD is programmed, predominantly, as twilight sessions and the school staff are expected to sign up for six sessions during the year. There are very few special schools designated as Teaching Schools and in this respect the school's CPD programme is quite unique. The programme is also valuable in supporting the next generation of teachers in special education: there is no specialist route available to meet the needs of these individuals. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the school's CPD programme is advertised through the Local Authority to supplement its own programme of professional development for SEND.

The school's CPD programme has been devised over a number of years and evidence of impact from the 2015-2016 programme was collated. Prior to the start of this partnership research CPD participants responded to the 14 courses offered between January and March 2016 and were asked the following questions

- *How relevant was the course content?*
- *How much did you learn from this course?*
- *What is your overall satisfaction rating?*

Participants were also asked to provide a short summary of their opinion of each course. Responses were positive, colleagues clearly valued the information presented and the opportunity to try out new approaches and technologies within days. Some of the negatives recorded related to the lack of time, repetition and training not being sufficiently specific to the needs of the participants. Very little was recorded about the quality of presentation or impact on teacher behaviours or the impact on outcomes for children.

Building on the success and feedback from 2015-16 the CPD programme for 2016-17 was developed by the school's Senior Leadership Team, taking into account areas of need in the School Development Plan as well as development requests from staff.

Research approach, relevant practice development and research methods

This new research project sits firmly in the current education context of evidence-based practice within the school-led system. The school wished to understand **“What difference does the East SILC’s CPD programme make?”** by

- a) investigating the impact of the CPD programme on teacher / teaching assistant behaviours in the classroom and;
- b) ensuring that future trainers are provided with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to do an even better job in future years.

In order to answer the question, **“What difference does John Jamieson School / East SILC’s CPD programme make?”** the research methodology adopted is an evaluative one. A timeline of the various research activities is shown in the figure 1.

Facilitation training

To further support the development of quality CPD some of the colleagues delivering the CPD programme have been encouraged to undertake facilitation training organised and run by Carnegie Leaders in Learning, at Leeds Beckett University. This has been designed to upskill colleagues in the pedagogy of facilitating adult learning. As it is difficult to release large numbers of staff for full days to access this training colleagues have attended in pairs and this arrangement will continue after the completion of the research project. In addition, between October and December 2017, eleven members of staff at John Jamieson School / East SILC attended Video Enhanced Observation training at the school. This was facilitated by colleagues involved in the Erasmus+ project led by Newcastle University and focused on the functionality of the App; the use of recorded and tagged video and the creation of new customised tags for more precise, targeted observation.

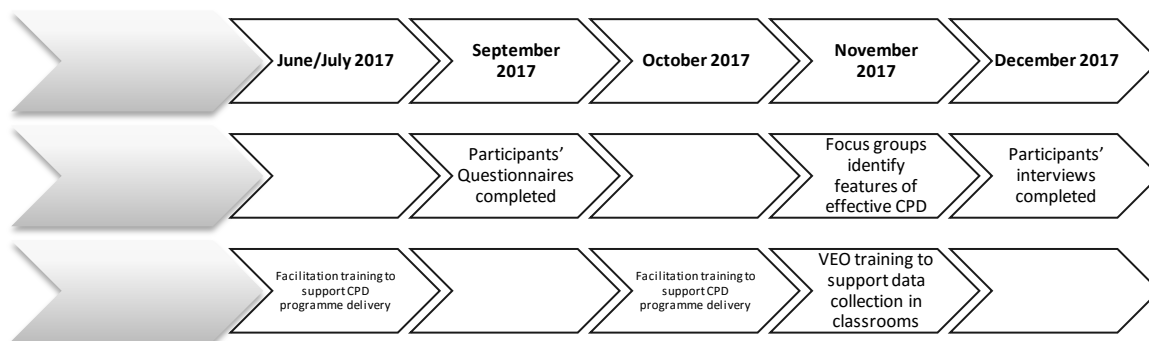


Fig 1: Research Project Timeline

Questionnaire

In relation to the CPD itself the first source of evaluative data was a questionnaire. Thirty-three individuals responded to the initial questionnaire in early September 2017, related to the CPD programme of 2016-2017. These individuals comprised sixteen teachers, eleven Teaching Assistants, one trainee teacher and five others. They had attended twilight sessions on Behaviour; Listening Programme; Lego Therapy; Deafness and Complex Needs; Intensive Interaction; Multi-Sensory Referencing/Objects of Reference; Speech and Language Development; Talkabout - Teaching and Assessing Social Skills 1 and 2; Amygdala Hijack: Managing Challenging Behaviours ; Readiness for Learning: Sensory through Integration; General Visual Awareness; Attention Autism; Positive Looking Training; Education City; Using Visual Supports 1 and 2; and Readiness for Learning: Positive Behaviour Management. Reasons for attending varied but the most frequent reasons for attending were because the training was part of an individual’s entitlement; of personal interest; or perceived as a career development opportunity. The sessions were mostly run by members of staff with particular specialisms; colleagues from the Local Authority SEND team; and external and/or national experts known to the school.

Focus group and interviews

In preparation for subsequent telephone interviews with some of those who responded to the questionnaire, colleagues were invited to participate in a short focus group activity, arranging statements into a Diamond 9 structure to illustrate their response to the question, “**What factors are important in ensuring CPD is effective?**” The statements used with the focus group derive from the abstract presented in CORDINGLEY, P The contribution of research to teachers’ professional learning and development *Research and Teacher Education: The BERA-RSA inquiry* Paper 5 December 2013. Further prompts were created through developing a summary of the academic literature accessed throughout the project.

Research outcomes

The CPD facilitator training

We took care to review the facilitator training, as part of our overall evaluation. One facilitator, who has led the Teaching School’s “Outstanding Teaching Assistant Programme,” commented;

“I personally found the training extremely useful. Throughout the day I found myself reflecting on my own practice and making notes as how to make myself present material in the most effective way.

I found the feedback after the practical session in the afternoon most valuable. It was useful to me to have colleagues give me suggestions about how to improve my practice and also to watch others and gain insight from them.

I envisage that in the future the training will greatly improve my skills as a facilitator. The main things I took away from the training were; to ask questions to provoke thoughts from participants, give them lots of time for thinking and reflecting and that teaching and facilitating are two very different things.”

There was insufficient time in the project to undertake classroom observations using the VEO technology however discussions about how this might be completed are still being considered. Not least because of the positive response by a senior leader with responsibility for ICT;

“The biggest advantage of using the VEO software, though, is the use of on screen annotations to accompany the video footage. Without the annotations video footage has to be interpreted by the viewer, with VEO the video is accompanied by aims and objectives, pointers as to what is happening in a clip and why it is important. Adding this all important meta data a teacher can

then search footage for particular events or outcomes to illustrate facets of the footage, building over a period of time a library of good ideas, techniques which are effective (or ineffective..) and “how to” guides for colleagues. With annotations the videos can stand alone without a human providing the commentary and can be put into an increasingly rich resource bank for the school.”

Moreover, the draft VEO report submitted to Erasmus+ recognised ‘New practices that were developed around the use of the VEO in the support of trainee teachers meant that they benefited from an improved focus on self-reflective practice and developmental dialogue. It also means that that trainee teachers were able to incorporate this practice into their professional understanding of them being responsible for the direction of their future development.’

The School’s Self-Evaluation Framework

In preparation for Ofsted, senior leaders contribute to the School’s Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) regularly. With regard to Team Teach training, senior leaders recognised its impact reflected in the significant drop in physical interventions being carried out. In Autumn 2015/2016 there were 72 Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPIs). In Autumn 2016/2017 this had reduced to 22 RPIs. The number of behaviour incidents over the past 4 years has reduced by over 60%. In February 2017, Ofsted reported

‘The behaviour of pupils is outstanding’

‘Staff’s work to support pupils who experience extreme difficulties in managing their behaviour is very effective’.

The success of CPD around behaviour management has subsequently had a positive impact on pupils’ attainment. This is demonstrated through improved engagement and readiness for learning with more pupils accessing lesson with minimum disruption. The success in the reduction of challenging behaviour has been complimented by a focus on a communication strategy a thread that has run through the CPD twilight for the past three years. The combination of pupil wellbeing and enhanced communication skills have resulted in improved attainment across the curriculum but most particularly English Speaking and Listening and PSHE, as shown table 1.

	Girls	Boys	Pupil Premium	Non Pupil Premium	CLA	Non CLA	All Pupils
English Speaking and Listening 2015-16	87%	91%	89%	89%	87%	90%	89%
English Speaking and Listening 2016-17	95%	94%	95%	92%	93%	93%	95%
PSHE 2015-16	87%	86%	89%	87%	90%	89%	92%
PSHE 2016-17	98%	96%	95%	100%	100%	97%	97%

Table 1: Changes in Key Pupil Outcomes 2015 - 2017

The responses of CPD participants: questionnaires

Responses to the questionnaires were very positive across all questions and from colleagues in all roles. A small number of questionnaires were negative and these colleagues were included within the sample for further interviews.

32/33 respondents agreed that the training had enhanced their knowledge and understanding during the CPD sessions. Many comments indicated that colleagues felt they had greater confidence. Some comments also linked to understanding the needs of the pupils; developing effective strategies; improving pupil behaviour and adapting practice in the classroom. One colleague commented, “I use my new knowledge and understanding of CPD courses to improve pupil’s behaviour through a more analytical response and we reviewed support on a daily basis.”

All those questioned agreed /strongly agreed that the training had enhanced their abilities in the classroom. This resonates with the lack of a Special Education ITT route and the amount of CPD required by teachers and support staff to develop appropriate skills.

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29/33 agreed that the training had changed their classroom practice, developing a wider repertoire of strategies and approaches; changing the way that staff and pupils interact; recognising a higher level of motivation by the pupils. One colleague commented that s/he can “Analyse behaviour and behavioural systems with unreserved scrutiny.”

Even regarding the tricky question of whether the training had improved outcomes for the children, 32/33 agreed / strongly agreed and cited the following examples -

- Improved management of crisis episodes in class
- Decrease in negative behaviours. Greater access to learning for all pupils
- Students are becoming more pro-active and communicating a desire to be involved.
- Pupils have more ownership of their own behaviour choices

31/33 agreed / strongly agreed that the presentation skills of the persons leading the training matched their preferred way of learning. Much of the training was described as visual, interactive and full of useful examples. Colleagues appreciated the use of practical examples, demonstrations and hands on experience.

A final question in the questionnaire asked colleagues about what would enhance the CPD programme in the future. The responses mostly identified the content, timing and frequency of the CPD programme. In feedback specifically provided to the school's Speech and Language Therapy team, staff indicated that the Speech and Language therapy CPD opportunities had significantly enhanced their knowledge and skills. Staff identified they left the training with a greater awareness of the impact of speech, language and communication needs. One staff member reported they felt they were now able to see things more from the child's perspective so had a greater empathy. Staff also reported that they feel more confident to use and develop their own resources to support learning across the curriculum.

The responses of CPD participants: focus group and interviews

The focus group activity discussing the question, “What factors are important in ensuring CPD is effective?” showed a high level of consensus between the groups, which included both facilitators and participants. The groups identified the following three statement as the most important factors –

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- Sustained collaboration with professional colleagues
- Structured peer support for embedding learning
- A focus on refining teaching and learning

These statements were used to formulate the questions for the interviews. Further prompts were created a summary list of the academic literature accessed throughout the project. Interestingly, the first statement about “Sustained collaboration with professional colleagues” links closely to two of the principles set out in the DfE’s Standards for Teachers’ Professional Development 2016; firstly that professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge and secondly that professional development programmes should be sustained over time.

The interview responses offered staff an opportunity to explain, in greater detail, some of their questionnaire responses. In addition, the eight respondents were also asked to reflect on the effective features of CPD and its impact on staff morale and retention.

Key themes emerging from the analysis

Sustained collaboration with professional colleagues

Throughout the interview responses there were few references to sustained collaboration, however, colleagues did recognise the value of working with professional colleagues commenting, “I like the range of professionals coming in, some by school staff, some by the Local Authority or outside companies” and “Good expertise from outside.” One respondent commented that s/he would value “getting help from other teachers, learning from each other in a focus group setting.”

Structured peer support for embedding learning

Again, the interviewees made few comments about structured peer support, but did refer to many opportunities to embed learning “straight away in your classroom,” with activities which are “instantly transferable to your cohort of children.”

A focus on refining teaching and learning

This was a rich source of evidence as the interviewees acknowledged the training was designed to refine teaching and learning, consequently having an impact on pupil outcomes. Staff recognised that the children's behaviour has improved commenting about that pupils are "more likely to focus and concentrate" and "attend longer, remain in group situations" and are "not isolated because of crises." Other examples of the CPD's impact on pupil outcomes are "The language of pupils has come on, using more spontaneous phrases" and "Pupils are able to use symbols and signs ... which gives them independence and communication skills.

Moreover, colleagues went into greater depth in explaining the impact their training had on their own behaviours and motivations, "It enables me to keep up to date in current initiatives and changes in education" and "It's made a difference to what we expect (of the children)." Further comments suggest that many staff value the impact of the CPD on their morale and on teacher retention, "feel employer is investing in your development." This was tempered by other comments about the time required after school to attend and the impact on an appropriate work/life balance.

Accreditation

Through the interview process, many varied requests were made for the content and timing of future CPD sessions, however, almost all colleagues who were interviewed commented about the value of accreditation for the CPD they had attended. Colleagues would value their skill sets being acknowledged in some formal sense and considered this would help develop their CV and career progression. The school could begin to consider how it might address this perceived gap in provision.

Research implications for practice and/or policy at an appropriate scale

Using Kennedy's (2014) model of the CPD Spectrum (figure 2) the school's approach to Continuing Professional Development would be perhaps best defined as a transmissive training model, although this is not to imply that the sessions are purely transmission based, and indeed the feedback from the participants suggests that the facilitation training has

ensured that where possible they take the form of a blend of ‘show and tell’ and participatory activities.

There is a **focus on refining teaching and learning**, in that participants are expected to develop ‘technical, role-focused knowledge and skills’ (Kennedy, 2014, p.695) and to some extent this is based on concerns about individual’s capacities to meet the needs of a diverse SEND cohort, and also to ensure that the school can meet the needs of the pupils. There is certainly sufficient evidence to agree that the focus of refining teaching and learning through the CPD programme is by design and not by default.

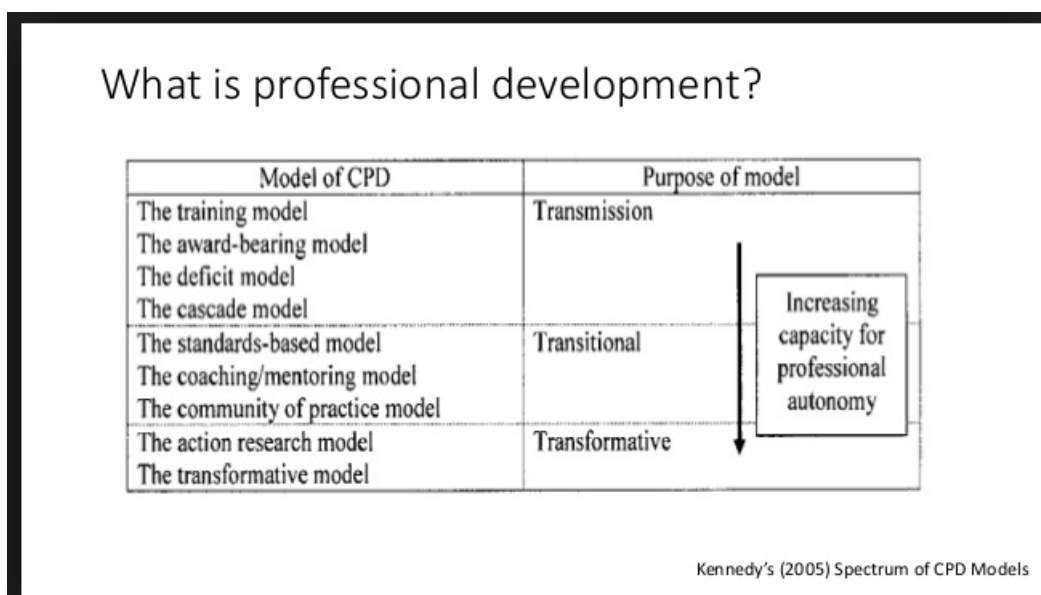


Fig.2 Spectrum of CPD Models (Kennedy, 2005)

Some of the interviewees have suggested that opportunities to **sustain** and **embed** learning have occurred during subsequent conversations with colleagues, but these have been more serendipitous than planned. There is a desire, expressed by the interviewees, to engage in a more sustained manner with professional colleagues and to benefit from peer support to embed learning. The school may wish to consider how it could provide wider opportunities to do and thus increasing the school’s capacity for professional autonomy. As Eraut states, 'Much learning at work occurs through doing things and being proactive in seeking learning opportunities; and this requires confidence. Moreover, we noted that confidence arose from successfully meeting *challenges* in one’s work, while the confidence to take on such

challenges depended on the extent to which learners felt *supported* in that endeavour by colleagues, either while doing the job or as back up when working independently.'

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Engaging parents in family learning: does it improve outcomes for children?

Lead researcher: Val Snowden, Family Learning and Partnerships Coordinator

Paper written by Ryecroft Academy Principal Helen Townsley working closely with Mark Randall Head of Primary Education, Simon Hayes Assistant Principal and Val Snowden Family Learning and Partnership Coordinator in The GORSE Academies Trust (TGAT).

Abstract

Parental engagement in learning is known to be a significant factor in improving outcomes for children (Desforges, 2003) and therefore, developing positive home/school relationships is a priority for many schools. In some areas where parents' experiences of and level of education is low, engaging parents in their children's schooling and their own learning and development presents a significant challenge. The project evaluates a family learning project at Ryecroft Academy to identify the key factors that enabled successful relationships to develop between parents and school and to establish whether these new relationships result in measurable improvements in terms of children's attainment, attendance and behaviour.

The project focused on the key question: *What are the key factors that facilitate the development of engaged relationships with parents in a family learning project in an inner-city primary school and do these bring about improved outcomes for children?* Our supporting research questions were:

- a) Does the family learning project impact upon parental engagement with schooling?
- b) What are the key elements within the family learning project that facilitate the development of improved parent/school relations?
- c) Does engagement with the family learning project impact on outcomes (defined as attendance, behaviour and attainment) for children?

A mixed methods approach was adopted, triangulating data from existing sources with information generated from parents and teachers through a phased approach to data collection. The research included quantitative and qualitative methods: designing and constructing questionnaires, conducting planned focus group interviews, semi-structured discussions, data analysis to scrutinise attendance, behaviour patterns and attainment. Limited document analysis was carried out during the research to provide background context which underpinned the overwhelmingly positive findings from the research.

The family learning project at Ryecroft Academy made a significant impact in widening participation, building higher levels of trust and confidence in parents, children and staff to realise the vision of The GORSE Academies Trust through a holistic approach to parental engagement.

Introduction

As part of its strategy to support education partners, Leeds Beckett University awarded £10,000 to Ryecroft Academy from the Carey Philpott Research Fund for collaborative partner research into family learning and community engagement which was identified as an area of critical development within the School Improvement Plan. Research was undertaken between January 2017 and January 2018.

This report sets out the following:

- Research question, rationale and context;
- Research approach and research methodology;
- Outcomes, analysis and discussion.

In developing the research methodology a participatory approach was taken which involved consulting widely with parents, stakeholders, teaching staff, governors, local partners and community representatives. This ensured we had understood the need and demand for the research, that it would be practically useful to support the development of family participation in the life of the school and that the priorities and actions described in the research would be shaped by the needs of our prime audiences: the parents, children and local community.

Research Questions, Rationale and Context

Research Questions:

To answer the key question of *What are the key factors that facilitate the development of engaged relationships with parents in a family learning project in an inner-city primary school and do these bring about improved outcomes for children?* we asked the following supporting questions:

- a) Does the family learning project impact upon parental engagement with schooling?
- b) What are the key elements within the family learning project that facilitate the development of improved parent/school relations?

c) Does engagement with the family learning project impact on outcomes (defined as attendance, behaviour and attainment) for children?

Rationale

Parental engagement in learning is known to be a significant factor in improving outcomes for children (Desforges, 2003) and therefore, developing positive home/school relationships is a priority for many schools. In some areas where parents' experiences of and level of education is low, engaging parents in their children's schooling and their own learning and development presents a significant challenge. The project will evaluate a family learning project at Ryecroft Academy to identify the key factors that enabled successful relationships to develop between parents and the school and to establish whether these new relationships resulted in measurable improvements in terms of children's attainment, attendance and behaviour.

Context

Located in an inner-city area of south-west Leeds, bounded by the ring road, Ryecroft Academy is surrounded by social housing. The community is within the lowest 10% deprived areas in the country with high levels of crime and unemployment. 55.9% of the pupils receive the pupil premium, placing Ryecroft within the 80th percentile on the free school meals and deprivation index. Relatively speaking, far fewer Ryecroft children are in the higher ability cohorts. With a record of poor performativity and instability, the 2016 inspection result, 'requires improvement' necessitated intensive measures to bring the school to the standard of all other primaries in the Trust. This led TGAT to refine its improvement strategy to engage with broader conceptualisations of pupils within the context of family and the community. TGAT seeks to provide every parent with the right to an education for their child in a good local school and to delivering outstanding schools in inner city neighbourhoods, through close collaborative partnership working. Family engagement at Ryecroft was deemed a key aspect of the strategy to achieve this objective and articulated in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

In 2013, DBIS highlighted that adult learning enhances health, well-being and family relationships, supports children's achievement and enables better access to digital technologies, employability skills and active citizenship which significantly enhance the life chances of families in disadvantaged communities. Improving attainment amongst white working-class communities, particularly boys, is a pivotal to DfE, Ofsted and the National College of Teaching and Leadership strategies.

Whilst the prime focus during 2017 going forward was to improve pupil attainment, Ryecroft sought to enhance children's broader outcomes through engagement with parents/older siblings and partners within the locality to develop connectivity and improve outcomes for families and the broader community. The TGAT strategy was to reach out to parents to support and encourage better understanding and build positive values associated with their child's schooling to contribute to improving success. Parents were encouraged to return to learning, to gradually build the confidence of families so that the children would be able to gain maximum benefit from their primary and secondary school experience. Relevant document analysis is unequivocal in pointing to the role of positive parenting and school engagement as significant factor in a child's academic success and well-being.

Approach and Research Methodology

The project approach sought to improve pupil outcomes through:

- Consultation with parents/carers/extended family to identify the key factors that facilitate engaged relationships with school and better understand and overcome the well documented issues associated with communities in high areas of disadvantage;
- Partnership based parental engagement and inter-generational opportunities for family learning, and volunteering based on identified need, including understanding the school curriculum, supporting children's learning, positive parenting, health and well-being, literacy and numeracy, employability and IT skills;
- Supporting parents to practice the skills they have learned and take these into the home;
- Enabling parents to build the confidence and motivation to engage and interact with school as a welcoming and inclusive environment through positive experiences in school;
- Dovetailing parental learning with school policies and procedures which demonstrably improve pupil outcomes such as the TGAT Positive Behaviour programme;
- Embedding family learning into the daily life of Ryecroft, with staff at all levels, to become an implicit aspect of the parental engagement and inclusion strategies for existing and new parents going forward;

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- Strengthening the partnership network with local organisations to address, for example mental health, housing and benefits issues and support parents to address individual barriers affecting family life, most notably worklessness and lack of aspiration.

Through growth in parental confidence, motivation, skills levels, experience, personal and social skills, children will be more actively supported to reach their full potential, taking a greater pride in their learning. School will be a more open and inclusive place, with parents routinely contributing to the overall growth and well-being of the school.

Research Methodology

The project adopted a mixed methods approach, triangulating data from existing sources with new data generated from parents and teachers through a phased approach to data collection. The research included quantitative and qualitative methods: designing and constructing questionnaires, conducting planned focus group interviews, semi-structured discussions, data analysis to scrutinise attendance, behaviour patterns and attainment. Limited document analysis was carried out during the research to provide background context. Parental approval was sought prior to participation in the research.

Phase 1 – Establishment of baseline data

Baseline data was collected from 28 parents and families attending a 'Learning Market' and through a post-event evaluation questionnaire from 12 partners. Questions covered parental preferences for family learning, employment status, language(s) spoken at home, qualifications and provider/partner feedback from parental interaction. This was supplemented with informal feedback and semi-structured interview information gathered, to build a bank of initial data from 88 parents across Years 1 to 6.

Data obtained included parental and partner views of the school, the education provided and specific barriers to engagement and was used to determine how to better engage with parents to understand and overcome specific issues affecting relationships with the school.

Phase 2 - Pupil outcome data

Children whose parents participated in the family learning project (sample group) were identified for the research. The children were matched to those of a similar profile in terms of

year group, attainment and projected attainment to create a control (intervention) group. Attainment and attendance data patterns over the year were monitored through the RAISE database for both groups to identify achievement trajectories and findings to be able to make an informed judgement as to whether family learning impacted on attainment.

Additionally, the attendance and behaviour of children of the sample group were monitored using RAISE data and assessed pre and post parental involvement in the FLP. This was not compared with a control group.

Teachers of children in the sample group were interviewed to establish whether they felt there was any noticeable differences in the behaviour, attitudes, attendance and attainment of these pupils. Teachers were also invited to comment on any improvements to parent school relationships within the intervention group.

Phase 3 - Parent engagement

7 family learning courses, based on parental preferences were delivered in 2017 following intensive engagement, resulting in attendance of 42 new parents in family learning sessions in school;

Parent interviews, post FLP, were conducted and recorded. Questions mirrored those in the initial parent questionnaires alongside additional questions designed to establish aspects of the family learning that parents found valuable in improving home/school relationships and engagement with education.

The focus, methodology, scope and the phasing of the project to ensure a robust approach and clear direction, as outlined, was initially agreed with the Leeds Beckett Researcher in Residence and was followed with no significant changes.

Outcomes, Impact and Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative feedback from parents and school staff has pointed to the significant improvement in home/school relations of the parents who engaged in the family learning project. Feedback has been secured from summative and formative assessments conducted by tutors during and at the end of the programmes, post course parental evaluations and through observation of teachers and school leaders.

Significant factors expressed by and observed with parents include:

- Growth in confidence, motivation and aspiration for their children and themselves;
- Improved self-assurance to discuss and deal issues arising in school;
- Better understanding of the school curriculum and how to support children's learning outside the classroom;
- Knowledge of how to hear children read at home and supporting with basic phonics;
- Positive changes in face to face interaction with school staff, a reduction in confrontational incidents and willingness to work collaboratively with school to address issues;
- Purposeful engagement with other parents has reduced isolation and loneliness;
- Using positive behaviour measures outside school and at home, including recognising improvement, praising and rewarding children appropriately;
- Enthusiasm and willingness to attending parent's evenings and taking pride in children's achievements;
- Offering to volunteer to support the school with trips, visits and engagement events;
- Parent-led development of a proposal for a community engagement hub in school to widen participation;
- Parent -led imperative to create a school garden/horticulture project;
- Identification of vocational training possibilities and employment for the future;
- Greater willingness to accept support from key agencies and organisations in the area to address barriers and issues faced on a day to day basis;
- Understanding of healthy eating, diet and exercise and ways to shop economically.

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Parental engagement was strengthened within the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in February 2016 as a strategic priority within leadership and management, based on parity of esteem and recognition of the critical importance of close involvement of parents and families in the life of the school. The realignment sought to create a shift in parent/school relationships, to embed a holistic family approach to building pupil and parental confidence, as illustrated through the following measures:

- Creation of a calm, welcoming, aspirational, attractive and inclusive school environment;
- Building pride in pupil achievements;
- Development of the school website to enable improved parental interaction;
- Enhancing access to school leaders for parents through 'open door' opportunities;
- Maximising all opportunities to involve parents in the daily life of the school, eg assemblies and certificate presentations;
- Strengthening playground interaction between staff and parents before and after school;
- Creating volunteering opportunities in school and recruiting parents;
- Facilitating coffee mornings, developing the PTA and strengthening the School Council with new parents;
- Focusing on the quality of home school liaison with partner organisations in the locality;
- Actively developing an understanding of specific barriers to parental engagement and broader participation, how they manifest themselves, and how to work with parents to address them individually;
- Embedding the engagement strategy throughout the school with staff at all levels for improved sustainability moving forward.

The alignment of family learning within the context of the broader school improvement strategy creates difficulty in isolating specific family learning project factors which contribute to improvement in home/school engagement in an entirely reliable way. However, SIP impact measures in parental perception through the holistic approach highlights that the increased uptake of parents through family learning, with evident growth in parental confidence and ability to support children's learning. 96% of parents believe the school responds well to concerns raised compared with 39% at the time of inspection, 91% of parents receive valuable information from school about their child's progress compared with 24% at inspection and that 96% believe the school is well led compared with 25% at inspection. The Ryecroft Parent's Council regard changes as overwhelmingly positive.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The following quantitative data provides an analysis of progress made by pupils whose parents attended the family learning project in attendance, behaviour and attainment from 2015/16 - 2017/18 and compares this data with a sample (control) group of 'similar' pupils whose parents were not involved in the project. The period 2015/16 to present has been used to give comparisons over time for attendance and attainment data as the timescale of the project was felt to be too short to provide statistically robust data to make comparisons. It is recognised that this creates an inherent unreliability in the methodology. Due to the instability of the school prior to Spring 2017, some data is missing which creates a further flaw in information. Previous instability and volatility within school including poor attendance and weak leadership may be relevant to the study because any relative gains made by students whose parents have been involved in the family learning project will have to be viewed in the light of these factors. Three pupils were removed from the sample due to their start point being later than 2015/16.

Attendance from 15/16 to present

The table below shows the average attendance from 2015/16-2017/18 for pupils whose parents were involved in family learning compared to that of whole school attendance up to 2017/18.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Family Learning Sample Group	97.18%	97.35%	98.33%
Whole school	95.7%	94.4%	95.0%
Difference	1.48%	2.95%	3.33%

Increase in attendance for sample group:

2015/16-2016/17 = 1.48%

2016/17-2017/18 = 2.95%

2015/16-2017/18 = 4.43%

Increase in attendance for control (intervention) group:

2015/16-2016/17 = 0.27%

2016/17-2017/18 = 0.98%

2015/16-2017/18 = 1.15%

Behaviour from 15/16 to Present

Due to different formats of behavioural management recording strategies it is difficult to gauge the impact on behaviour since 2015/16 to the present day particularly through the Year 2016/17. However, from the data available, for pupils whose parents were involved in the family learning project there was a reduction of 'serious behavioural incident' by 75%.

* *Serious behavioural incidents including but not limited to acts of fighting, assault, racism, swearing and defiance.*

Attainment from 2015/16 to Present

Ryecroft Academy went through a period of difficulty, with teaching being graded as 'well below average' until the introduction of new staff including leadership and management in February 2016. The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved.

Progress from 2015/16 to the present day excludes Year 3 and Year 6 data due to unavailability. Optional SATs to inform teacher assessments were used for data collection:

	2015/16-2016/17	2015/16-2017/18 current assessment
Reading scaled score points progress	-1.00	2.86
Writing scaled score points progress	1.43	5.29
Mathematics scaled score points progress	-2.43	5.71

Progress from KS1 data to present day (Year 3 excluded due to timeframe), optional SATs and previous SATs used for data collection:

	2015/16 - 2016/17	2015/16 - 2017/18 current assessment
Reading scaled score points progress	-1.03	3.07
Writing scaled score points progress	0.39	7.48
Mathematics scaled score points progress	-0.74	5.71

Comparison to Control Group

Attendance from 2015/16 to present day

The table below shows the average attendance for pupils whose parents were involved in the family learning project compared to that of control group which is based on pupils of same gender, year group, pupil premium status and KS1 data.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Progress 2015-18
Family Learning Sample Group	97.18%	97.35%	98.33%	1.15%
Control Group	96.59%	96.71%	96.53%	-0.06
Difference	0.59%	0.64%	1.80%	1.21%

Behaviour from 15/16 to present day

The data is not strong enough for comparison due to changes in the internal methods of recording behavioural incidents.

Attainment from 2015/16 to present day

Progress from KS1 data to the present day (Year 3 excluded due to timeframe), optional SATs and previous SATs have been used for data collection:

	Family Learning Sample Group 2015/16-2016/17	Family Learning Sample Group 2015/16-2017/18 current assessment	Control Group 2015/16-2016/17	Control Group 2015/16-2017/18 current assessment	Difference 2015/16-2017/18 current assessment
Reading scaled score points progress	-1.03	3.07	0.25	0.88	2.19
Writing scaled score points progress	0.39	7.48	-1.25	2	5.48
Mathematics scaled score points progress	-0.74	5.71	1.5	-1.13	6.84

Conclusions

The qualitative data shows gains within attendance and attainment and improvement in behaviour as measured by reduction in serious incidents of the family learning sample group above those of the control group in all cases within the 2015/16 and the 2017/18 data. Reading, writing and maths gains in attainment of the sample group are substantially higher than the control group. This is deemed to be attributable to increased motivation and involvement in the life of the school and engagement in children’s learning by parents in the sample group. The qualitative and quantitative data supports this premise.

It is noteworthy that over 50% of the parents who attended the FL come from the most deprived and second most deprived streets in the surrounding Ryecroft estate and this would seem to

add weight to the contribution made by the family learning project to the improvements in attendance, attainment and behaviour.

The implementation of the family learning project at Ryecroft Academy has made a significant impact in widening participation, building higher levels of trust and confidence in parents, children and staff that the Gorse Academies Trust vision is being realised through a holistic approach to parental engagement.

Brief summary of literature sourced:

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Goodall J, Vorhaus J with Carpentieri J, Brooks G, Akerman R and Harris A (2010). Research Report – DFE RR156, Review of Best Practice in Parental Education.

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How can I develop the capacity for research informed and evidence based practices within our school?

Lead Researcher: Steven Riley, Director of Research, Bingley Grammar School,

Preface

My rationale for undertaking this project is rooted in my belief that the policies and procedures that penetrate through every aspect of school life should be built on firm foundations. It is my view that every decision should be based on tangible evidence and with the consideration of the school in context. Brown, 2015 suggested that:

The seeking, use and sharing of effective pedagogic practice is viewed as vital to school improvement and as a necessary response to the structural changes facing many school systems worldwide. This is especially apparent in England, where the current direction of education policy is providing impetus for teachers and schools to generate their own improvements in teaching and learning. (Brown, 2015, p. 70)

In the last decade of working in a school setting, I have seen many techniques come in and out of fashion and have had my own teaching practice judged against criteria that I have often questioned. When I began to question this enough to begin my own research, I started to see that there seemed to be an issue within the education system. It seemed that I had started in the profession at a time when “off the shelf” teaching strategies were being utilised in favour of evidence informed practices that had firm foundations.

When I began reading a little more into relevant literature, it became increasingly clear that many popular practices, without justifiable research, were being ‘utilised’ in schools. According to a 2014 news item on the ‘Sutton Trust Endowment Foundation’ website, some examples of these are:

- *Using praise lavishly*
- *Allowing pupils to discover ideas for themselves*
- *Grouping pupils by ability*
- *Encouraging re-reading and highlighting to memorise key ideas*
- *Addressing low aspirations and confidence before teaching subject content*

- *Presenting information to pupils in their preferred learning style*
- *Ensuring pupils are always active, rather than listening passively to what you want them to remember*

These areas were widely used in schools and often had the term 'research' associated to them, when very little evidence actually existed proving that the strategies were worthwhile.

When I moved to my new school I was delighted to see that leaders understood the importance of developing 'evidence-based practice', both in-house and accessing wider research materials from other sources. Upon joining the school, I heard that 'research groups' were running, for teachers interested in investigating pedagogical areas of interest and developing as practitioners. I immediately joined one of these groups and spotted opportunities to help develop it, so that wider research could occur throughout the school, involving more colleagues than ever before.

However, in order for this development to occur effectively, it is vital that I understand the barriers to research and evidence informed practice and can therefore consider ways and means in which to avoid these, and create structures and systems within school that will best serve our staff in order to expand the capacity for quality research and evidence based tasks to underpin decisions made in our school on a day-to-day basis by members of staff at all levels.

Context

I believe that the best CPD is based on research and evidence, and rather than focusing on one particular area of research on my own, I feel that enabling more staff to conduct their own research and by developing a 'research-culture' within the school, impacts upon student outcomes and staff development will be far wider. The existing senior leadership team at my school identified the development of CPD as a priority for improvement. I have been appointed to implement strategies that will help this priority to progress effectively, on a whole-school basis. Before embarking upon this project, I completed a Masters research project to ensure that I had the relevant understanding and competency in order to lead on this strategy effectively, the findings of which I have summarised in section three of this working paper.

Research Approaches

This paper is part of a wider research and development approach. In the first instance, a literature review has been undertaken. This has resulted in the specific development of policies and procedures within my school and my capacity to help staff develop key pedagogical practices. In this working paper I will report the literature review and share my analysis and conclusions. This leads onto a discussion about how this has helped to develop school-wide structural changes of staff CPD and research support structures to aid and empower our staff.

It is worth noting that this working paper is an extension to research I conducted as part of my Masters dissertation, in which I investigated staff perception of and potential barriers to implementing and utilising research strategies within my school. Many of my findings are included in section three of this working paper. It should also be noted that this is a 'work in progress', and the implementation of strategies is ongoing, which will make it difficult to report fully on the emerging outcomes of the project at this stage.

Literature review

The purpose of this section is to review the academic literature regarding the possible impact of using research and evidence to inform teaching practice and the possible barriers to the implementation of these practices.

Evidence-Based and Research-Informed Practice

Whilst conducting my research I began to see two terms, 'research-informed' and 'evidence-based' practice. Looking into this more closely it became clear that the two are very different. In a modified publication of 'Evidence-Based Management, The Basic Principals', 2016, the following statement is written: 'teachers are being mistakenly encouraged to be researchers rather than as evidence based practitioners'. The document went on to explain why the two are different: 'research informed practice is a subset of evidence-based practice'. Evidence-based practice involves drawing upon evidence from a range of sources be it 'academic research', practitioner experience, organisational/school data and the views of stakeholders. It explained that there are risks associated with the term 'research-informed' as it has the potential to create the impression that this evidence is more valuable than other forms of evidence, which is not the case at all. A stand out quote within the documentation was

'Evidence-based practice is here to help teachers improve, rather than prove'. This suggests that misinterpretation of the term may be counterintuitive, but if teachers can engage with research during CPD activities, then the practice could help teachers to improve.

Barriers to Consider

Much of the literature I have studied makes it clear that in order for teachers to use research and evidence to inform their practice effectively, it is vital that they understand that any findings that are found or shared will need to be considered within their own educational settings. This may be perceived as a negative issue, especially if a practitioner takes the view that all schools are 'unique' and therefore no evidence will be relevant. Although it may be true that all schools and classrooms are different and ever changing, many will face similar challenges and will often respond to these in similar ways. For effective development to occur, there needs to be an understanding that commonplace issues within schools may have employed relevant strategies that are worth exploring, before being modified and trialled in their relevant setting. Stenhouse (1975) commented:

The uniqueness of each classroom setting implies that any proposal—even at school level—needs to be tested and verified and adapted by each teacher in his own classroom. The ideal is that the curricular specification should feed a teacher's personal research and development programme through which he is progressively increasing his understanding of his own work and hence bettering his teaching. (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 143)

Stenhouse's point implies that evidence-based practitioners should be flexible and understand that all classrooms are unique, and although possible solutions to common problems may be available, they will need constant adaptation.

On the subject of understanding research findings, McIntyre (2005) suggested that one problem was to do with teachers disregarding findings, if they are unable to interpret them:

It is usually only when research findings have been synthesised with other relevant knowledge that practical suggestions can be generated that are worthy of the attention of busy teachers. (McIntyre, 2005, p. 364)

McIntyre implies that in order for practitioners to develop, they cannot simply utilise strategies that are handed to them; rather they must have the skills to conduct and interpret the evidence for themselves.

Further reading indicated that there seems to be other reasons, besides those already discussed, which might deter teachers from undertaking evidence based research, even though there are many arguments to suggest that it can be highly beneficial. Brown (2005) commented:

Many are deterred from engaging in continuing research activity because of the pressures they experience from government or school policies that focus on specific targets, measurable learning outcomes, narrow performance indicators, inflexible contractual arrangements, hierarchical accountability and the pervasiveness of the idea of some 'best practice' that should be identified and then adopted by everyone.
(Brown, 2005, p. 401)

Brown considers other practical implications of the teaching profession, suggesting that teachers have too many other pressures, from school or government policies etc., to add something else to their workload.

As previously mentioned, Nibset (2005) has commented that research should not be a 'bolt on', an additional burden, but instead something that could and should be woven into everyday practice. However, with this comes a possible other issue: staff may not feel that they have the expertise or the resources for such undertakings. Helmsley-Brown and Sharp (2003) considered:

[teachers] did not use research literature because they perceived it to be irrelevant, unhelpful and too theoretical. They claimed they lacked time, did not trust the findings, and could not understand the language or make sense of the statistics. Teachers also said that research literature was not available in their immediate surroundings.
(Helmsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003, p. 454)

Helmsley-Brown and Sharp indicate that staff may not access research for a whole host of reasons. A lack of trust, understanding and interpretation of findings and statistics may all be responsible for teachers not being able to utilise any information that they gather if they do

engage. In terms of information being irrelevant, this may also be down to the fact that practitioners are looking in the wrong place and the possibility that additional support and guidance may be required. Finally, in terms of access to resources, if these are not readily available, it is an obvious barrier in preventing engagement.

Echoing some of the issues identified by Helmsley-Brown and Sharp, Broekkamp and Van Hout-Wolters (2007) identified four interrelated problems that mark the gap between educational research and practice:

- a) *Educational research yields few conclusive results; or educational research does not provide valid and reliable results that are confirmed through unambiguous and powerful evidence.*
- b) *Educational research yields few practical results; or educational research is limited in practical use.*
- c) *Practitioners believe that educational research is not conclusive or practical; or educational research is not meaningful for teachers.*
- d) *Practitioners make little (appropriate) use of educational research; or practitioners do not have the skills to use educational research results.*

All of these points are potentially damaging for research or evidence informed activities. There seems to be a problem that any results found from research undertakings may not be conclusive or reliable; this is likely to lead to school leaders questioning whether the practice is good use of time, money and resources. However, there have been many arguments within this report that would counter this, that indicates the benefits of evidence-based practice being utilised to inform decisions made in school. Point number four from Broekkamp and Van Hout-Wolters' list adds further weight to an argument that perhaps it isn't that research and evidence do not have a place in school, instead that perhaps teachers may not have the necessary skills in order to utilise the practices effectively.

Emergent practice

Form the research that I have conducted, including work in my MA dissertation, the following considerations have been reflected and acted upon:

Benefits of Research

- Allows us to use evidence when making decisions about what to do in our classrooms
- Takes away some of the 'hit and miss' nature of educational initiatives
- Adds to the professionalism of what we are doing
- Allows teachers and professionals to continue being learners

Types of educational research

- Research Informed (finding out what research says about something, also including enquiry)
- Evidence based (trying something you have read or heard about and learning from it) – this doesn't have to be from scholarly sources
- Action research (linked to the above; conducting research and reporting upon it)

Our collaborative CPD work incorporates all three, as we research to find out what has worked and we experiment to see if it works in our context.

Perceptions and barriers of research-informed practice:

Connotations and perceptions – Research vs. Evidence informed practice

- *Language used: the word research has specific connotations, leading to misconceptions of expectations. Lexis is an important consideration when communicating a vision of a research culture within the school*
- *If utilised correctly, in-house research, supported by Higher Education can be an extremely powerful development tool*
- *We want BGS to become a 'research-rich' environment, with staff conducting and utilising research*
- *Within the next couple of years, we envisage everyone in school utilising research at some level, whether that is producing an academic paper for publication or simply reviewing or discussing work conducted by a colleague, or reading an interesting journal that is shared in school*
- *Research findings and expertise will be shared more widely across the school*

Impact of time

When conducting my own research into this project, 'time' was referenced to be one of the biggest barriers to staff for conducting research. We know that this is an important factor and we are creating a system to mitigate the burden of time as much as possible.

- CPD time will be allocated accordingly
- Designated INSET days for research activities
- Research will help staff to develop professionally, and may save time in the long-run
- Not a 'bolt-on', we want to embed research and evidence into day-to-day practices

Access to resources

One of the biggest barriers to staff conducting research is access to resources.

- To get around this, the partnership we now have with LBU will mean that everyone can access the extensive online and physical library at the University
- 'Research-Leads' will be able to direct you to relevant literature to support your own CPD

Online Portal

- Everyone who signs up to LBU will have access to an online resource where academic journals (etc.) will be published, including work completed by our own staff
- Physical Library
- A section of our Library will be designated for staff to access pedagogical books that we are starting to build up

Staff Expertise and required training

- Confidence in ability and not having the knowledge, understanding or skills to research are not only barriers, but also could lead to poor quality research, and negative outcomes
- To help mitigate this issue, staff training will be given and support structures will be put into place. Research-leads will all be studying at M-Level; there will be a senior 'Research Chair' who will have a linked University Tutor. 15 key members of staff will be taught how to research effectively and further 'drop in sessions' will be run to help support others. Expertise will be shared and QA assurances implemented

Conclusions and recommendations

Now that I have conducted my research, I have been able to draw many conclusions about best practices when considering the implementation of strategies which will allow us to develop the capacity for research-informed and evidence-based practices of teaching staff within our school. My recommendations have been outlined here:

Staffing Structures

Using our School Improvement Plan and Ofsted framework, I have identified areas of focus for staff to conduct research in. These areas are: Effectiveness of leadership and management, Quality of teaching, Learning and Assessment, Personal development (Staff and Students), Behaviour and Welfare and Outcomes for pupils (affected by all areas). Each of these areas will have subcategories that will have very specific research foci. Having staff conducting this specific research and then feeding back to others in the school (either through CPD sessions, progress meetings with staff or through published works) will help to ensure a wider impact and give further opportunities to allow staff members to develop their pedagogical practices.

If we have an ever-improving provision of staff development, within the school then the outcomes for students will improve. It is difficult to pin-point exactly where this improvement will be because of the nature of this project and the amount of research that will be being undertaken.

The whole point of developing this initiative is to ensure that research evidence informs decisions at all levels; for example, it could lead to improved policies and procedures such as the behaviour and rewards model that is used. It could lead to (amongst many others) improved PSHE and pastoral care for students; staff managing their time more effectively; streamlined procedures, having better communication of leadership visions and most importantly: higher quality teaching and better results for students who will leave the school better prepared for their next steps.

In order to utilise staff from middle leadership positions, I have implemented support measures and opportunities for them to become 'research-leads', where different staff members will focus in on particular areas of need. These middle leadership 'leads' will then be able to support other staff who want to conduct research, and they are naturally in a position to feed findings up to senior staff and down to staff within their departments.

My research also suggested that forcing people to conduct research could be potentially damaging and counterproductive. With this in mind, the school will simply suggest areas that need researching, and staff can volunteer to focus on their chosen area. These areas will be dictated by the school, considering the school improvement plans and Ofsted criteria. Staff who are part of the aforementioned three-stage system will be the most likely candidates to lead on the research and are likely to be the first set of staff involved with the project.

The research findings from these teams will be published and shared with staff. Also, workshops will be utilised to share practice and findings. This is a model that had previously gone down well in the school, with many staff remembering and speaking highly of the John Hattie workshops that were conducted a few years ago. From my research, staff seemed to share the same feeling that communication was not as good as it might be; so it will be vital to develop an open dialogue and show staff what work is going on.

Not only will this help foster the research-culture, which is the vision of the headmaster, but will also penetrate throughout the school. At the very top, research should be driving school development projects; this is where the 'top-down' approach of the 'flatter model' will be an important factor. At the bottom of the model, will be staff reading about and discussing the work done by the research teams (who will have fed back to middle leaders, where the 'bottom-up' approach will be being utilised). So at all levels, staff will be involved with research, at some level.

Essentially, what I have attempted to create is a working model where staff can access research, and utilise the findings of it, at every level throughout the school. As previously mentioned, it will be marketed as 'evidence-informed practice' to help minimise the impact of any negative connotations held by my colleagues.

At the very top of the research model, I will look to offer PhD (or equivalent) research qualifications, for any member of staff who feel they want to train at this level. Below this, MA qualifications (or equivalent) will be offered. These qualifications will ensure that we have staff in school who can become 'research leads', which I will discuss in more detail later in this report. Below the Master's qualifications, I will look to implement staff training for how to conduct research effectively. This training will increase staff competency and should ensure better quality research. I have decided to put this in place because of the high level of feedback I received, expressing that support measures would need to be in place. It will also act as a stepping stone onto the two other stages whereby qualifications can be attained. If staff want to research without gaining a qualification, that option will be available to them.

This three-stage model will act as the backbone to my overall project. In order to move to a model where all staff are accessing research at some level, I intend to create 'research teams' and 'research leads'.

Access to Resources and Partnerships

Another issue that I noted was the requirement of having access to relevant research material. It is an obvious assumption that in order to allow staff to research effectively, then access to research material will be vital.

As part of the three-stage model I have previously mentioned, I will be looking for a partnership with universities who will be able to provide access, not only to courses, but also to library resources too. It is quite ambitious, but finding a partner who will allow all staff to access their resources as part of a partnership agreement is a vital part of our implemented system. It will also mean that key staff in the research teams can direct staff to key reading material. It is worth noting that although this resource would be vast and highly influential to the project, staff at the school will more than likely need guidance in accessing relevant material. In the interviews I held as part of my MA, having a 'research-champion' was voiced. This would be somebody who will take an overall lead on research activities and the necessary partnerships that will accompany the project.

In addition to the resources that would be provided by the university partnership, it was also suggested that an 'in-house' library in school would be greatly received by staff.

In my opinion, there would need to be various aspects of this resource. Firstly, an electronic library where material can be shared and utilised. Secondly, a separate area where publications created by staff in school can be published and shared, which will allow all staff to access and utilise the research conducted by staff studying towards their post graduate qualifications, or that is produced by the research teams. Finally, a physical space in the school library, which I envisage to be a growing resource of publications by key researchers and practitioners. The work completed by our staff could also be printed and made available in this space. The benefits of this would be multiple in my opinion. Firstly, for staff who prefer to look at a 'real resource' rather than accessing electronic material. Moreover, I think that the presence of this section in the library accessed by students will have a positive impact on them. For them to see staff continuing their learning will convey a positive message of life-long learning. It may also send out a similar message to staff who have a somewhat closed mindset about their practice.

Impact and Measurability

Whilst implementing my research strategy, a reoccurring message from leaders of my school has been that research tasks that are conducted would need to be measurable, particularly with regards to student outcomes. I partially agree with this sentiment, but when one starts to consider what would constitute as evidence of impact, things become a little trickier, and the considerations far more subjective. I foresee that in future, results will be high on the agenda for anyone looking at whether or not the project is successful. However, there is a much wider picture, which must be considered. It will take great bravery and open-mindedness for staff to trust that the system is having positive effects. The impact may be a teacher gaining confidence or the reengagement of a student who may have otherwise slipped through the net. It could be that plans and projects are implemented more effectively and efficiently. Many of the outcomes may not be specifically measurable, but there will definitely be impacts, and I fail to see how staff looking at ways to improve their practice and having the support and guidance from qualified colleagues could possibly have a negative effect; providing the structures that are implemented are done so correctly.

As part of the research culture I want to nurture, I want staff to feel that failure is acceptable and that no research is a waste of time if undertaken effectively and for the right reasons. I genuinely feel that there is a real possibility of achieving a shared vision of having a 'research

culture' in school, where the opportunities are there for every member of staff to develop, with a knock on positive effect with regards to our students' outcomes.

Further Considerations and next steps

Management Styles Within an Organisation – Employing Suitable Systems

Following the publication of this working paper, I shall be developing further documents exploring managerial structures, which will consider best practices for the implementation of the strategies I have outlined. Throughout my research, it became clear that a hierarchical approach would not be appropriate and that a 'bottom-up' system would require a thought-through organisational structure in order for findings from research activities to be utilised effectively.

As previously referenced, this working paper accompanies an ongoing project, which will continue for the foreseeable future. The next steps that I intend to implement to further increase the capacity for research and to further embed a 'culture of research' within our school community will need to be considered carefully. Initial reading has indicated to me that discussion groups, a 'book club' style research-focussed gathering and a research blog or regular publication are all likely to have a positive effect. I also intend to work more closely with Leeds Beckett University in order to allow key staff from our school to have working papers of their own published, to report on their own research findings. Sharing and developing whole-school practices will also be a vital consideration. Along with other key areas, the aforementioned foci will be explored in a further working paper that I will produce.

Conclusion

Overall, I feel that this project has been highly successful so far and has the scope to continue to help with the development of staff CPD and increase the capacity for research-informed and evidence based practices within our school.

Moreover, due to the way that it has been implemented, many aspects of the school are set to benefit. As more teachers access research and become proficient in research methodology, day to day teaching is set to improve, as is the implementation of whole school projects, which will be increasingly based on firm and relevant evidence. I have managed to achieve my short

term goals for this project, but the growing culture of research-informed practice is set to continue, and I will continue to lead in this area.

Now that research teams have been established, the project becomes about more than just one person with a vision of improvement, and rightly so. It is my belief that we are now developing expertise in many important areas of the school, which can be easily shared with colleagues. Moreover, the brokered partnership with Leeds Beckett University continues to offer a wealth of further developmental opportunities and will be instrumental in the future of our school. All of the developments that have arisen through this project are set to have benefits to our students, who will be taught by more highly qualified and experienced members of staff.

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‘Drilling through the concrete ceiling’

Pioneering BME female leaders leading the way in secondary education.

Sameena Choudry, Founder Equitable Education Ltd.

Abstract

This working paper is based on the findings of qualitative data obtained from 12 Black and minority ethnic (BME) female Heads and senior leaders in state funded secondary schools in England. The main purpose of this research is to focus on both the barriers and enablers that have led these women to succeed in educational leadership positions at a time when there is a growing BME pupil population and the corresponding BME leadership figures remain stubbornly low. The research uses an intersectional approach (Crenshaw) with a focus on ethnicity and gender and other characteristics where relevant. Data was initially obtained via questionnaires, based on one devised by McNamara et al but adapted for the purposes of this research and followed up by 10 semi structured interviews. Drawing upon seminal work into BME teachers (Osler, Bush et al) and women leaders (Mc Namara, Coleman and Fuller) this working paper draws on the experiences of the respondents, highlighting the barriers both structural and individual they have faced, as well as the enablers that have supported their success. Finally, the article draws on the findings of the research to make recommendations aimed at policy makers, schools and individuals to enable BME females leaders to break through, not just a ‘glass’ but the ‘concrete’ ceiling.

Keywords: Black and Minority ethnic (BME), female leaders, gender, ethnicity, barriers/enablers, secondary education.

Introduction

The main purpose of this working paper research is to understand and learn from the experiences of existing heads and senior leaders in leadership positions so that we can explore ways to increase the numbers of BME female secondary Heads. The study situates its findings in the context of existing literature. An intersectional approach (Crenshaw 1987) has been used whereby both ethnicity and gender, along with other protected characteristics,

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as defined by the Equality Act 2010, where relevant, are considered together to see how they impact on the likelihood of BME female teachers becoming Heads.

The Department for Education's (DfE) 2016 data shows that only 3.1% of heads in schools are from BME backgrounds compared to the pupil population of 31.4% in primary and 27.9% of secondary, with considerable regional variations in both. BME pupils made up 71% of the increase in pupil numbers in primary schools between 2015 and 2016 (DfE, 2016) and if current rates of increase (one percentage point annually) were to continue, BME pupils will be in the majority before 2040. However, at a time when the pupil population is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, the leadership of schools remains stubbornly low particularly in terms of ethnicity and also gender, whereby more than 70% of the education workforce is female and only 38% of heads are female (Fuller):

In her book 'The Education and Career of Black Teachers' Osler (1997) warns us of the dangers of treating women as a homogeneous group since they are likely to have both common and varying experiences. This research is cognisant of this fact and presents the findings within these confines.

Methodology

A small-scale research study was undertaken with a focus on the secondary phase of education to find out more about the experiences of 12 senior BME female leaders. Of these 5 are existing heads and 7 aspirant future heads who are currently in senior leadership positions in state funded schools. The focus of this research was on the following two key research questions:

- What barriers hinder or have hindered the progression of aspirant BME female leaders to Headship?
- What factors have enabled or could enable BME women to become Heads?

Data was initially collected through a detailed qualitative questionnaire and then followed through by the use of semi structured one-to-one interviews. The main researcher is female, of BME background, and a former senior leader in schools with significant experience of working with heads and senior leaders in schools, across all phases. This should enable the limit the effect of the impact of the 'observer' who is an 'outsider' (Gunaratnam, 2003).

A detailed questionnaire was compiled with a number of questions under the following headings or sections - Background details; Details of career history; Details of career progression; Barriers and enablers to leadership aspirations - ranking these in order of relevance or importance using a Likert scale. Details of experience and perceptions of BME careers in education and leadership in particular with a focus on intersectionality and finally actions that would help BME teachers in achieving their leadership aspirations

The questionnaire was a slightly adapted version of the one used by McNamara et al (2010) and a semi structured interview was then used to probe further and to get more detailed qualitative information, picking out key themes raised in the questionnaire on the barriers and enablers that required further exploration. The semi structured interviews were carried out over the phone on a one-to-one basis and took approximately an hour per interviewee. These semi structured interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. In addition, no reference is made to the names or personal details of the respondents to protect their anonymity and to avoid their identification.

Research findings

Barriers

A multitude of reasons were identified as barriers by the participants of the research study, with the most commonly cited as being in the top three were lack of self-confidence, availability of suitable posts and attitudes of senior leaders displayed in covert racism and sexism which will be the subject of this working paper.

Other common barriers included attitudes towards BME teachers, caring and family responsibilities and being young. In addition factors such as social and cultural issues, lack of professional networks and workload were also cited as barriers that impacted negatively upon progression.

Self-confidence is a recurring theme which has been highlighted in research on gender inequalities. Coleman (2007) found that over time there had been little change, with women remaining less likely to plan careers that include senior roles and they still appeared to have less confidence in applying for promotion than their male colleagues. This was a recurring theme with some of the respondents interviewed. It was something they were aware of when

reflecting, acknowledging its presence and likening it to a disease but despite this they decided to go ahead and apply for leadership positions as a cure, even though self-doubt still lingered.

Coleman (2007) also suggested that women can use over preparation as a strategy to compensate. A number of respondents mentioned that they worked extra hard and in some cases over prepared as a strategy to overcome their lack of confidence. This has implications for the amount of effort, resource and pressure female colleagues unnecessarily put themselves under at a time when workload and stress is cited as a common factor in leaving the profession, with the retention rate among secondary heads having fallen from 91% in 2012 to 87% in 2015 (NFER 2017).

McNamara et al's research (2008) cited the lack of availability of suitable posts as one of the three top ranked barriers for females. Nearly all of the respondents interviewed felt that there were a limited number of suitable posts available to them. This was particularly the case for Headship. In the vast majority of cases where respondents had been successful it was because a suitable post had become available either in the school they were already working in or within the local vicinity. Unfortunately, if these opportunities had not come up locally, the education system would have been deprived of their leadership skills, with the women themselves not necessarily considering applying and hence progressing in their careers. There were several exceptions to this whereby respondents had relocated to different geographical areas to gain promotion, primarily for those who didn't have children or caring responsibilities and where this was the case it was at considerable expense to their work life balance and their families. In one case it was seen as something that could be done for a short period of time of two years or so with plans for moving nearer to home when the opportunity allowed, especially now that the respondent had been able to prove her leadership capabilities by improving a school that was previously seen as 'failing' by Ofsted to 'good'.

The limiting and negative attitude of senior leaders coupled with the factors mentioned previously, manifested itself in various ways. In one example the young respondent highlighted how her male senior leader felt that there was little point in promoting her because he believed, although he said it in a joking manner, that she was going to go off and have babies and therefore, there was no point in promoting her. This led her and other several colleagues in a similar position, deciding to leave the school.

It was not only sexism that some of the respondents had to deal with but racism too. One respondent cited an example of racist comments being made about the food she was bringing

in for lunch and also the comments and incorrect pronunciation of her name which was referred to as 'banter' and 'teasing'. This also led to the respondent leaving the school.

This particular colleague subsequently anglicised her name when she changed her workplace so that it was less 'foreign sounding' and because she was of fair complexion it meant that colleagues were unable to immediately know that she was from a BME background.

In the main though it was more likely to be negative and exclusionary attitudes towards the respondents rather than direct discrimination which impacted on what went on in school. In one case the respondent felt that she knew from discussions with other senior colleagues that her 'face did not fit in with the white man's club at the top'. In contrast, in her new school she felt valued and recognised for her work rather than being singled out for her gender and ethnicity.

In another example, the difficulties of being a female BME leader, with a Muslim background were further compounded when the respondent had to deal with a team of four white men who resisted many of the strategies she tried to implement as their line manager.

The barriers faced by some of the respondents in this study clearly shows that embedded and negative attitudes towards women (Coleman and Mc Namara) and BME (Osler and Bush et al) leaders still prevail in our schools even though these were first identified by researchers many years ago. Despite successive legislation being passed since then e.g. The Equality Act 2010 which makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender and ethnicity or for that matter other protected characteristics, those on the receiving end still face the difficulty in countering the more subtle acts that can take place on a regular basis.

One of the positive findings of the latest research (Runnymede Trust and NUT 2017: page 5) is that 'A higher proportion of BME staff in a school was associated with respondents feeling that the school was an inclusive and welcoming environment for staff of all ethnic backgrounds', showing that at least schools generally are becoming a better place to work in. This finding was generally replicated in my research.

Enablers

A range of factors were identified as enablers, although there was more of a consensus as to what these were. Overwhelmingly, qualifications and experience were cited by all participants as a key factor, with the majority identifying this as the most important enabling factor.

The remaining top four factors identified in order of commonality were attitudes of senior leaders, performance management, involvement in professional networks and access to CPD opportunities, including fast track leadership programmes or mentoring and coaching.

The female BME leaders taking part in this research overwhelmingly stressed that it was important to have over and above the minimum qualifications and experience to be an effective leader. The vast majority had an impressive array of qualifications ranging from formal qualifications such as Masters or MPhil's in a range of subjects to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) or National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders (NPQSL) for those who were in senior leadership positions. Osler's (1997) research explains the desire for further study and advanced qualifications of her respondents as an attempt to outweigh anticipated discrimination in employment which was replicated in my study.

In nearly all cases the respondents taking part in this research were well aware of the traps of falling into a dead end or stereotypical career route highlighted by researchers more than 20 years ago (Osler 1997) but still stubbornly evident today (Runnymede Trust and NUT 2017). Instead they had actively pursued or had the opportunity to take on a wide range of roles to develop the breadth of experience needed to be successful as a Head or senior leader.

In many cases it was the support and positive relationship with a 'significant' senior leader, often the incumbent of a person who was in a senior leadership position that empowered the respondent to apply for and be successful in a leadership position, particularly headship.

Not only did these 'significant' people encourage them to apply, in some cases they also pointed out the differences in perceptions based on gender and articulated how males would behave in the same circumstances. This encouragement, practical support and belief in the respondent played a pivotal role in their success.

In addition, in the case of the respondents taking part in this research, performance management provided an opportunity to truly shine and bring together their individual needs with the needs of the organisation. As Page (2015 page 13) explains 'For those practitioners

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who meet their objectives, those whose teaching meets the 'good or better' standard, the appraisal should ideally be a motivating experience and even be linked to progression through the pay spines...' My findings were contrary to Page's findings of appraisals where judgements on performance were generally found to be opaque and 'less visible'. More recent research (Runneymede & NASUWT 2017 page 18) also found that '...decisions about performance are not always fair and equitable, and the achievements of female and BME teachers are often underrated'. Since all the respondents in my study have been successful so far, it is likely this factor is unusually skewing the findings towards performance management as being a positive rather than the negative force.

Fortunately, for the respondents, they felt the performance management process was an opportunity to show their capabilities in an open and transparent manner with evidence to back up the impact that they have made through the successful examination results of their students. In another example even though the results for the school had been terrible, the respondent has been able to prove that her students had bucked the trend and done well, thereby being the only member of staff who moved up the leadership pay scale.

Being part of a network was also seen as an enabling factor. According to Ibarra and Deshpande (2004), networks are essential as they enable one to generate new ideas, to get the information and support needed and to expand one's influence. They can also provide mentoring and sponsorship, regulate access to jobs, augment power and reputations, thereby increasing the likelihood and speed of promotion.

Interestingly the respondents who cited this as an enabling factor were not only cognisant of the benefits of networks but were also fully aware of how not being part of a network or being an 'outsider' can detrimentally impact on one's career progression. It was recognised that social media, especially #EduTwitter¹ was providing avenues to build networks and connect with a wide range of educational professionals, especially for those from non- traditional backgrounds.

Two non-traditional inclusive networks were singled out in conversations as being of particular support. Firstly, #WomenEd which is a grassroots network for aspiring and existing women leaders and secondly #DiverseEd or Diverse Educators, which is to celebrate and showcase diversity, equality and inclusion in education and covers a range of characteristics such as

¹ #EduTwitter is an informal term used by educators who are connected on Twitter which is a social media site.

ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability. Both were formed and developed through social media and were cited by one respondent as creating the equivalent of an 'old boy's network' and thereby creating opportunities for those who were not white, male and wealthy.

Closely linked to networking is having access to high quality continuing professional development (CPD), including fast track programmes such as 'Talented Leaders', and leadership programmes such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL). All respondents had benefited from such CPD opportunities. This enabler is also inevitably closely linked in with the number one factor of having high levels of qualifications and experience.

Conclusion and recommendations

My research has shown that BME female leaders in secondary education in England face a number of barriers which are related to both their gender and ethnicity. The aggregation of these characteristics can mean that the women who have succeeded are 'drilling through concrete ceilings' as opposed to already difficult barriers of shattering the 'glass' ceiling (Loden 1978). They are true pioneers paving the way for others to follow in their tracks. The concrete ceiling concept demonstrates the lump of composite material that hardens over time as it sets. It acts as an immovable barrier to prevent career progression. It also acts as a physical block preventing others from even seeing BME colleagues as leaders, with those who wish to get to the top having to use a drill to get through the concrete, unlike the glass ceiling which can be shattered, illustrating the arduous task that lies ahead.

What is evident is that many of the reasons cited as enablers in their success is as a result of individual factors, such as qualifications that the respondents were themselves able to take control of. They also often benefitted from a strong professional relationship with a 'significant' person. This 'significant' person provided strong support for the successful leader by mentoring or coaching and empowering them to realise the potential they have. However systemic barriers remain that make it difficult for there to be a pipeline of future leaders coming through the system. This is even more so an issue for BME female leaders where instead of there being a pipeline to leadership, there is a 'kinked hose pipe', which due to the kinks splits in several places causing leaks, thereby losing considerable talent that could be potential leaders.

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In order to change the culture and practices of leaders and their governing bodies or trustees an investment in comprehensive training and awareness is required e.g. training in anti-discrimination and preventing staff being marginalised into stereotypical roles, for all those involved in recruitment, selection and promotion of staff.

Both Ofsted and the DfE wield considerable power over what happens in schools and should not only lead by example and take action to ensure that the people in charge of running their organisations are representative of the diversity of the pupil population they serve, but also ensure that schools are themselves taking action to remedy the poor situation as it exists.

The litmus test will be to see if there is strong political will and action to enable more under-represented groups to have the opportunity to experience both the challenges and rewards of being a Head.

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Using formative feedback in primary schools to promote pupil progress and reduce teacher workload

Lead researcher: Sally Whittell, Class Teacher and Research Lead, with John Parkin, Executive Headteacher (Primary), Pontefract Academies Trust

Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a two-term research project which focused on the use of formative assessment strategies with pupils across 6 primary schools within the Pontefract Academies Trust. Based on the work of Hattie (2008), the three formative assessment strategies were developed and utilised by teachers within the Trust with a view to developing learner progress and independence, whilst also reducing teacher workload. In order to explore the impact of these strategies upon pupils and teachers, a focus class was selected in each school and a range of data was collected and analysed. This included: before and during pupil progress data; before and after pupil surveys; teacher and headteacher surveys; observations of each class; a representative sample of pupils' books in English and Maths in the second term. Key findings from the project indicated that through the use of the strategies, teacher workload was dramatically reduced and that ran parallel to increased pupil progress and independence.

Research questions, rationale and context

This multi-method research project took place over the school summer and autumn terms of 2017 across all 6 primary school within Pontefract Academies Trust where the percentage of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average. The project was initiated by the Executive Headteacher, who, through discussion with teaching staff and senior leaders, was interested in looking at developing formative assessment strategies which would both advance pupil progress in the priority subjects of Maths and English and address teacher marking workload issues within the Trust.

In terms of promoting pupil progress, the Executive Head appointed an outstanding classroom teacher as Research Lead and they then worked with an Assessment Champion in each of the 6 primary schools to identify 3 key formative assessment strategies underpinned by the findings Hattie's large scale project on assessment (2008). Building on the work of Black and Wiliam (1998), Hattie articulates formative assessment strategies that make learning 'visible'

to pupils and which, therefore, promote independent learning and progress. Some of these practical strategies have since been packaged for primary school teachers (e.g. Gadsby, 2012).

However, set against this focus upon the importance of formative assessment, the ways in which schools across the country implement such strategies is highly inconsistent. This is in part due to changes in the common inspection frameworks (Ofsted 2015; Ofsted 2017), which are less deterministic in terms of how they view formative feedback taking place in school as the emphasis is switched to whether or not pupil progress is evident within books rather than the feedback method used. In line with this open invitation to schools to develop their own formative assessment practices, the National College of Teaching and Leadership's own research findings (NCTL, 2014) advocate a wide range of tools for promoting and tracking pupil progress, which are explicitly underpinned by a wide range of learning theories.

Whilst this presents an opportunity for school leaders and teachers to determine their own assessment policy, it also creates uncertainty and the government's simultaneous focus on reducing teacher workload around marking (Independent Teacher Workload Review Group, 2016) is an acknowledgement of how assessment practices in schools continue to be a burden to overworked teachers. The government's resulting action plan (DfE, 2017, p.2) indicates a clear resolve to work with schools to dispel what they term the "myths about preparing for inspection" in terms of "marking". With new data being published which shows teacher attrition for 2016 at an all-time high (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017), it would seem that across many schools, Trusts and Academies, these "myths" are very much still absolute truths.

With Pontefract Academies Trust having their own concerns around marking workload affecting teacher wellbeing, and with their understanding of the ways in which formative assessment could be used both to promote pupil progress and independence as well as potentially reduce teacher workload, we were keen to address the following research questions:

1. How can specific formative assessment strategies provide learners with appropriate feedback to promote progress?
2. How can specific formative assessment strategies promote independence?
3. How can specific formative assessment strategies provide teachers with sufficient information about pupils' learning to inform their teaching?
4. How can specific formative assessment strategies reduce teacher workload?

Research approach, practice development and research methods

The Executive Head, Research Lead and Assessment Champions developed a formative assessment toolkit, comprising of 3 key strategies:

- Using instant verbal feedback: this has been shown (Independent Teacher Workload Review Group, 2016) to have more effect than written feedback and it also means that teachers do not necessarily have to provide written feedback.
- Asking pupils to use coloured highlighters to indicate where they (self-assessment) and others (peer assessment) have met the agreed success criteria for a piece of work. The learner takes control of their learning, shaping and editing their work and other's work during the lesson and, thereby, developing greater independence (Black & William, 1998).
- Asking teachers to use a coloured coding system instead of written feedback in pupils' books, which pupils will act upon at the start of the subsequent lesson. This could involve: editing or correcting, using a purple pen; attempting 'challenge' work; addressing a misconception or 'challenge' in a guided group. For example, during an English lesson a teacher might give some pupils a red dot which means they should edit their story using their purple pen in order to develop characterization. Not only does this cut down on teacher written feedback, but it also crucially places the onus upon the learner to make the improvements, thereby promoting independence (Black & William, 1998).

This toolkit and the rationale for its implementation was shared with all staff in the 6 primary schools at the start of the summer term 2017 as an INSET with the idea that all teachers could use this in their everyday teaching. In order to focus the evaluation on the use of the toolkit across Key Stages, a class of children in each school was selected as outlined in Figure 1 below.

School Name	Summer Term 2017	Autumn Term 2017
Carleton Park	Y1	Y2
Lark's Hill	Y1	Y2
Halfpenny Lane	Y4	Y5
The Rookeries	Y4	Y5
Orchard Head	Y3	Y4
De Lacy	Y4	Y5

Fig. 1 Classes selected for research project

As the project crossed the academic year, the idea was that data would be collected in relation to each class as they transitioned into the subsequent school year. In order to see whether the toolkit had a demonstrable impact upon learner progress, this data included progress data in English and maths for the two terms prior to and during the project – this enabled us to determine whether or not pupils had made a greater rate of progress than expected as a result of the toolkit. Whilst the nature of this comparison was seen as problematic due to the project taking place over the transition into the new academic year where pupils' progress dips nationally, and whilst we recognised issues with the ways in which progress is measured within the schools and how variables other than the toolkit would come into play, it was felt that this data could indicate the success or otherwise of the toolkit across the 6 schools.

In order to capture how this progress or otherwise took place and how learner independence may have been promoted by the toolkit, each class was observed by the Research Lead in the autumn term and a sample of pupils' work in maths and English representative of class ability was analysed in terms of progress in response to feedback (both verbal and coded). As the research team were also interested in how the pupils responded to the toolkit, the observations included short discussion with pupils about assessment, which were then noted. All pupils in all classes also completed short surveys relating to their learning and their perceptions of formative assessment in the summer and autumn terms.

Equally, as we were interested in how teachers found the toolkit both in terms of improving their teaching and reducing workload, our observations focused also upon the teacher's role in learning and surveys relating to the use of the toolkit and workload were administered in the autumn term. Finally, as we appreciated that the continued use of the toolkit would depend very much upon the buy-in of the headteachers in each school, we also asked them to complete a survey in the autumn terms.

In line with the British Education Research Association (BERA), institutional ethical guidelines were followed with all teachers and senior leaders being provided with information sheets and consent forms which included their right to withdraw at any point during the project. Information about the project was also sent to parents and carers via a newsletter with the option available to withdraw their children from the data collection process. Verbal assent from the pupils was also secured at the beginning of the project and at the beginning of the autumn term. Whilst the schools are named for this working paper, all teachers and pupils have been anonymised.

Findings and Discussion

How can specific formative assessment strategies provide learners with appropriate feedback to promote progress?

Progress in writing before and after the use of the toolkit for each key cohort in the six schools is shown below (Fig. 2). One of the schools was unable to provide data due to issues that arose within the school during the time of the project. Of the five schools that submitted data, the majority (3) show that the rate of pupil progress in writing after use of the toolkit was greater than that prior to its use. Though not conclusive, this gives some indication of the effectiveness of the toolkit in raising rates of pupil progress. However, one school's data (LH) shows the opposite trend, with progress lower following the use of the toolkit. The reasons behind this are too complex to relate here but the outcomes of this research project coupled with other issues concerning the current pupil tracking system in use within the Multi-Academy Trust,

have led to a wider dialogue with a view to replacing this system with one that is more accurate, user-friendly and provides more opportunities to record appropriate data about each pupil.

% of pupils in focus cohort making expected progress in writing (4 steps on pupil tracking system)		
School	Before: Sept 2016 to March 2017	After: April 2017 to December 2017
CP	90	90
DL	Not submitted*	
LH	63	23
HL	79.3	93.1
OH	66	71
TR	58	77

Fig. 2 Pupil progress tracking data for writing – before and after.

**The Y4 teacher (Feedback Champion) left the school and the Y5 class was unfortunately taught by a number of supply teachers resulting in comparisons being unobtainable.*

In contrast to the problems associated with the quantitative data, evidence from pupil books and questionnaires from leaders and teaching staff suggest that the strategies trialled have been very effective. Of those surveyed, 94.1% of teachers reported a positive impact upon pupil progress and 94.3% noted an increase in pupil confidence, as they discussed their work. This is evident within the work samples (see appendices) which show improved pupil progress through varied strategies, when compared to the original marking system. Previously, pupils read teacher comments after learning took place and the feedback was rarely responded to; whereas after, the pupil improved their work at the point of learning, self-assessed and applied learning further during response time (see annotations) and progress is clear. This is also supported by pupil survey data, which shows that 94% of pupils felt that instant feedback helped them to improve their writing.

How can specific formative assessment strategies promote independence?

All strategies trialled involved placing greater emphasis upon pupils engaging with their own work, with feedback being instant whenever possible. As addressed previously, strategies such as this can add great value to learning processes (Black and Wiliam, 1998). During observed sessions, increased learner independence was clear. In one Y1 English lesson, the teacher clearly modelled by underlining particular word types in a colour, which the children then attempted to do independently using their own writing. One child noted that they did not have any adjectives and afterwards edited his work by adding some in purple pen. In a year 2 lesson, the children displayed significant levels of expertise and confidence in peer assessing the work of a partner as they responded to the teacher's marking through the 'coloured dots' system. Here, the level of peer scrutiny for pupils of this age was high, with specific, subject-related vocabulary used across the classroom as all pupils were engaged in the process of 'activating learners as resources for each other' (Black and William, 1998; Gadsby 2012). These examples provide evidence of feedback strategies increasing pupil independence and also supporting immediate progress within a session. Independent blue pen work can also be observed in appendices 4 & 7, where we see that the pupil was able to make many improvements as a result of feedback in different lessons and contexts, without further support.

How can specific formative assessment strategies provide teachers with sufficient information about pupils' learning to inform their teaching?

Prior to the project, reports from many teachers indicated that many marking systems are not fit for purpose, with hours wasted writing comments. One teacher wrote, 'They couldn't read the comments before anyway but now they get the feedback and respond as soon as, they are now starting to notice things themselves too,' and such a response was frequent across all schools. Despite not being the focus of the research, it is clear that the strategies have enhanced assessment for learning opportunities in classrooms. Teacher comments on instant verbal feedback include: 'It helps you to immediately pick up on and deal with misconceptions, whilst also moving children on'. This is supported by several lesson observations, where teachers were observed addressing misconceptions via verbal feedback, or via the coded system. During one observation, the teacher explained how she had planned the coded feedback, to address misconceptions and deepen understanding of higher achievers. She was able to spend time supporting children, whilst others were being challenged; progress was

clear as children responded in purple pens (see work and further examples within the appendices particularly appendix 5).

How can specific formative assessment strategies reduce teacher workload?

Despite changes to the common inspection framework (Ofsted 2017), the Executive Head felt that 'Convincing leaders [to use the toolkit] is more difficult, especially when Ofsted are due'. Indeed, even with permission from Head of the Trust, many teachers still expressed concerns, including that they were not working hard enough, which indicates the need a shift in culture after decades of over-marking. However, supported by findings above, we see that by increasing pupils' engagement within the feedback system and a reduction in workload can go hand in hand. Of the teachers surveyed, 88.6% felt that there had been a positive impact on teacher workload, with the remainder reporting no change. This may be due to some schools using only verbal feedback before the project, however, challenge was difficult to evidence when only using this method. One Head reported, 'As a leader, I see more engagement than previously. Teachers are going home earlier!' This is supported by teacher comments such as, 'I can spend more time making lessons better and more engaging for the children'. One teacher also commented that after the project, a school's feedback policy would be a crucial factor when she was applying for jobs. At a time when retention is low, this shows the impact of changing policies to meet the needs of pupils and staff.

Implications for Practice, Leadership and Dissemination

In conclusion, there was an overwhelmingly positive response from the research project from pupils, staff and senior leaders. One hundred percent of senior leaders said that they would continue to use and adapt these strategies within their schools and there was a significant positive impact upon teacher workload. Despite this, fifty seven percent of those surveyed requested further training for staff, indicating that the early stages of the project are now ready to be developed. In light of this, our next steps are to:

- Deliver further training to all schools through INSET to support and enhance current practice;

- Widen this training to secondary schools within the Trust to ensure a smooth transition to Key Stage 3;
- Develop Formative Assessment Toolkit materials to share good practice within the Trust and beyond (e.g. with the NCTL);
- Develop a robust pupil progress tracking system across the Trust.

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Appendix 1

Tuesday 20th September (I)

LO: To write a story.

One day I went to my shiny iPad and pressed the black tern on button. But then a bubble sucked me up I thought at first that it was a tornado. After that the bubble took me to a stinky forest with lots of crunch leaves on the floor. When I had explored the forest, I saw a little wooden house. I tried to skwazi through the doorway. I finally got in the house there was lots of photos on the wall. I met a really nice police man. The police mans house was very big. It was kind of camouflaged because he had some pigs on his front lawn. The pigs were cute and ruby red. The police man gave me some handcuffs. I was really kind so I looked for my bubble and I got inside and went home.

Great description using purple adjectives and some interesting sentence openers Harrison (by to keep these varied all the way through).

Try to use a variety of co-ordination conjunctions (FANBOYS).

Below, the pupil used coloured success criteria to highlight features from the lesson steps to success. This shows understanding of adverbs and adjectives. The pupil then discussed the choices, explaining why they were effective, in response time. See App 2.

Feedback here took place after the session. The child has made no response to comments and progress is not evident.

LO: To write a character desc

The BFG is as tall as the Snowy White mountains on top of each other. Suddenly every year the BFG's pointy nose

Appendix 2

and pointy ears get pointier.
Every morning, the BFG changes his trousers, but on Fridays he puts on extra tight jeans with a snow white top and a caramel brown waistcoat. Every morning, the BFG rushes to the mirror to see if his bright pink hands to see if they had got any bigger (by now they will be humming every day). For breakfast the BFG eats snotty snozzwumber before he collects sparkly dreamys. When the BFG goes to collect the tiny dreamys he takes leaps of miles.

Great adjectives, similes and time adverbials
Harrison

Use brackets to add extra details.
Try to use a variety of time adverbials.

Here we see the teacher has in effect re-written what the child had self-assessed, in order to fulfil the school marking policy - who is this for? The child had self-assessed before handing in the work and made no improvements after written comments were made - the comments are therefore superfluous. Teacher handwriting is also inconsistent, due to writing such voluminous comments often late in the evening in every book!

Appendix 3

Friday 31st March 2017

10: to write a story.

The child has written independently and self-assessed using different colours to show evidence that they have met elements of the success criteria - unfortunately these are not easy to pick out! The teacher has highlighted successes in yellow, after the lesson.

•	• Steps to success for my story	
•	• Date	
•	1. Did I join my handwriting?	
•	2. Have I used capital letters and full stops?	
•	3. Have I tried to use paragraphs?	
•	4. Have I used good adjectives to describe?	
•	5. Have I included some direct speech?	
•	6. Did I use time adverbials, followed by a comma? Any other adverbs?	
•	7. Did I choose interesting verbs	
•	8. Conjunctions .. s, a, b, o or FANBOYS	
MY TARGET (from last time, if it's appropriate)		
SH skills and then HI,TA cover draft/ paragraph 1 whilst SH at FS training week then assessment week and half term. SH finished for 3 days after half term. Some gaps in books evidence due to this.		

On Sunday morning, Charlie was playing in his huge garden for fun. As he was wandering in the garage, he stumbled across some very colourful paint. Grandad was watching him play then he saw him looking at some paint. He shouted to Charlie "you can use that but only if you paint something nice." Charlie said back to him "ok." Then Charlie asked Grandad a couple of questions about the colourful paint. At this point, Charlie was very curious about to paint.

When Charlie arrived at summer school, he said Amy in the distance and said "I have some very colourful paint." Amy snatched the colourful paint from Charlie's hands and immediately started painting a cute pig; it came to life. Charlie was amazed! Amy was feeling amazed too. Both of them thought the pig was so cute. The cute pig and Amy quickly became best friends.

Appendix 4

As soon as Charlie found out whatever you draw it comes to life, Charlie ^{grabbed} his two favourite colourers and ^{pointed} a slimy alien. Suddenly, the alien came to life and started causing problems. ^{only} if he had listened to ^{said} Grandad. Grandad said "You can use that but only if you paint something nice," so they don't get in trouble.

The slimy alien wouldn't stop chasing them until Charlie came up with an idea. His idea was to paint a bottle of water for they could wash him away he's only point. Next, they quickly painted the bottle of water and then hid from the alien. When he had his back turned they splashed him with the water (he was soaked!). All of the alien's slime came off of him. A couple of minutes later the police came to arrest the alien.

A couple of days later, the alien got released from prison. The end.

Said Said Said

The teacher has written a spelling and explained to the class that this means it must be corrected below the work. The child has done this during response time and then discussed overall successes with a peer, based on teacher highlighting and their own self-assessments. During this time, the pupil has acted upon peer feedback and amended work with the blue pen. During this time the teacher is free to address misconceptions with pupils and provide more specific praise. This took the teacher less time than writing several comments at the foot of the work and (once modelled) progress is evident.

A session was spent on this piece of work. The teacher modelled peer-assessment, closing one book and sharing the other with a partner, concentrating solely upon elements of the success criteria. During this early stage, the teacher has highlighted successes in yellow, but the task involved children finding evidence and 'proving' that they agreed or disagreed with the teacher's judgements. Here the teacher made no written comments in the evidence column. Teacher and TA concentrated on 7/8 pupils each providing specific verbal feedback and discussing their writing/further targets. When peer feedback was finished, the teacher and TA were able to see the further 15 children, ensuring that every child was able to discuss and celebrate their work with both a peer and an adult.

Self and teacher assessment.

HL11

Checklist for a super story.

Steps to success	Evidence	Teacher agreed? (tick, cross or mostly)
Have I used capital letters and full stops?	✓ Grandad/As Beth Charlie You One Sunday When Amy	
Did I join my handwriting?	✓	
Have I tried to use paragraphs?	✓	
Have I used good adjectives to describe?	✓ Very colourful cute Soaked Sunday	
Have I used some direct speech? "Hello," said Charlie merrily	✓ "You can use that but only if you print something nice!"	
Time adverbials, followed by a comma.	✓ One Sunday morning. Suddenly	●
Conjunctions. s,a,b,o or FANBOYS	✓ For so - keep aiming for variety Bella! 😊	
Did I use some interesting verb choices?	✓ released ✓	

Self and Peer Assess (working and discussing together with open book open to analyse)

What did I do well?

★ I used good adjectives to describe ✓ - keep choosing them for impact 😊

★ I used good Fanboys and adverbials

What is my next step?

👣 My next step is to use varied verbs - see target (PB)

Appendix 6

Wednesday 11th January

LO: To understand alphabetical order. ✓✓

1. Sticks, pebbles, fire ✓ fire, sticks, pebbles ✓
sapphire challenge
1. pebbles, pots, pans, packets pit. packets pit pans pebbles
2. Chalk, cuts, cardboard, cotton, concrete. Cardboard, chalk,
concrete, cotton, cuts.
3. Green, grass, granite, gravel, bottles, boxes, bricks
grass granite, gravel, bottles, bricks, bricks, bricks

Charlie, Hamison and Millie ✓ (I) ✓✓

Here we see no written comment. The teacher has instead identified a common error and marked any books containing this just with a pink spot. In class, the teacher then explained the error in a group and gave the children a further consolidation task, which the child completed independently in blue.

Friday 13th January 2017

LO: To use a dictionary to check meaning. ✓✓

1. Diary. A diary is a book in which to write about what you have done.
2. dictionary. A dictionary is a book in which words are listed alphabetically and explained.
3. Weight. The weight of something is its heaviness.

I am confident at finding words in the dictionary and reading the definition.

Here the teacher sorted the children's books according to their success. Then a coded system was added to books and children had to 'work out' which statement applied to them, sharing and proving this to a peer. Teacher comments are reduced and pupil engagement is increased.

Appendix 7

Is this WAGOLL effective? APE. (Kagan pattern work) ● We added more. ★ Learning Objective Achieved! ★

Steps to success	Evidence	Is this effective (explain to your partner)
1. Did I join my handwriting?	X	
2. Have I used capital letters and full stops?	It was a hot summer day Hot Summer day ✓	
3. Have I tried to use paragraphs?	✓	
4. Have I described the setting?	Charlie's magical chalk ✓	
5. Have I used good adjectives to describe?	Hot amazed special excited hard tiny ✓	
6. Have I included some direct speech?	✓	
7. Did I use time adverbials, followed by a comma? Any other adverbs?	APE! kindly mischievously suddenly finally next furiously	
8. Did I choose interesting verbs	bounced off ✓	
9. Conjunctions. s,a,b,o or FANBOYS	Because for and but so	
Anything else you would like to add.	ED post tense: started, bounced, rubbed, brushed and confused, and smacked, spotted, slugged, smited, bounced off	

ISCUSS- Does this story have a beginning, middle, problem, resolution and an ending? Is this important? Does it have to be in this order?

Here the pupil has self-assessed as before but is beginning to analyse further, choosing to add exemplification of past tense verbs independently. This also allows the teacher to see any misconceptions/opportunities for further assessment/challenge.

Appendix 8

Wednesday 21st June 2017.

Here the pink pen shows praise from the teacher at an early stage. The teacher also immediately picks up on a spelling error and uses this time to explain to the child. Since receiving verbal feedback related to use of specific adjectives, the child has added more in blue pen and even improved 'big', changing it to 'massive'.

21st June 2016

L0: To use exclamation sentences

WAGOLL:

What a large nose she has!

How evil she looks!

1. How evil she looks with that killer cane! ✓
2. How gross she is with that snotty nose! ✓
3. What a long chin she has! ✓
4. How horrible she looks in that jet black suit! ✓
5. What scary hair she has! ✓
6. What fat legs she has! ✓

Appendix 9

7. What a ~~bread~~ bread head She has!
8. How Sweaty armpits She has!
9. What massive feet She has.

What a good reader Matilda is!
How Smart she is!

Here, rather than telling the pupil what he has done well, the teacher uses a coded system to provide more able children with an opportunity to apply their understanding, correcting a piece of work and re-writing it.

Beyond Performance Management by Observation: *An Enquiry into Effective Professional Development for Teachers across a Multi Academy Trust*

Lead researchers: Claire Dutton and Jack Wardle of The Rose Learning Trust

Abstract

Performative lesson observation is widely used in schools, purportedly, as a tool through which leaders may improve standards of teaching and learning. However, the high-pressure and judgemental nature often associated with such an approach is largely considered to mitigate any potentially positive outcomes of the observation process.

This action research project sought to explore whether a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) was able to change a performative lesson observation model to a more effective strategy for teacher growth in confidence and self-esteem, thus impacting positively upon teacher practice and self-efficacy. The project was funded by the Carey Philpott Partner Research Fund via the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University and it involved the three founding primary schools of a newly established MAT.

The project originated from an intention to introduce Video Enhanced Observation (VEO) to support peer and self-observation practices. However, a growing appreciation for the complex, phenomenological nature of teacher development led the study towards investigation of the nature of professional autonomy and teacher agency. As a result, this led to a wider approach being implemented based on coaching models.

The findings of this study contributes to the wider discourse among the researcher-practitioner community surrounding coaching and it argues that teachers should be involved in the processes of improving their own practice - as subjects of change, not objects being monitored or constantly surveyed. Further, that the opportunity to be involved in professional dialogue helps to enhance the learning and development potential for teachers.

Introduction

Lesson observation continues to be one of the most widely discussed and hotly debated areas of practice amongst those involved in the teaching profession. In recent years much of this debate has centred on its use as a performance management mechanism with which to evaluate the quality of teaching and teacher effectiveness. In England, the removal of graded lesson observations from Ofsted's inspection framework marked a significant milestone in policy development, which heightened interest further and opened up new possibilities for the way in which the teaching profession conceptualises and engages with observation.

O'Leary, 2017, p.1

In an attempt to take hold of those 'new possibilities' referred to above, this action research project sought to explore whether a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) was able to change a performative lesson observation model to a more effective tool for teacher growth in confidence and self-esteem, thus impacting positively on teacher practice and self-efficacy for development. The study involved the three founding primary schools of a newly established MAT, *The Rose Learning Trust*, based in Doncaster.

The project's aim was to identify and develop an alternative model to performative lesson observation, one which would be more developmental for teachers and, ultimately, more effective at improving teaching and learning practices. Originally, the project intended to achieve this through the creation of peer and self-observation practices with the support of Video Enhanced Observation (VEO). However, as the project progressed it grew into a much wider approach based on coaching models.

Methodology

In seeking to bring about improvement and change in practice through disciplined reflection and the development of a wider, more critical awareness this study assumed that cyclical process aligned with an action research approach. A dedicated research lead was identified in each of the schools and they conducted the project as practitioner-researchers with the support of a researcher-in-residence provided by Leeds Beckett University. Additionally, throughout the project, participants (i.e. teachers across all settings) were considered active

subjects in the research process and, through open dialogue with the research leads, as collaborators involved in guiding the project and its outcomes where possible.

The research activity followed a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach that placed the research problem at the forefront of the project and allowed for a cumulative, open-end design which was able to respond to queries as they arose during the different stages of evaluation. Throughout, the project was guided by the following research questions:

- What do we mean by teacher growth and development? *How does this impact on teaching and learning practices? Moreover, how does this link with the teacher's responsibility for pupil learning outcomes?*
- What are the most effective ways of helping teachers to grow and develop? *What do schools already have in place? What are the potential barriers for new approaches?*
- Who is responsible for teacher growth and development? *Where does responsibility currently lie and why? Are current positions on this most effective?*

At times, the broad and open nature of this project seemed ambitious for the limited timeframe agreed within the funding opportunity presented by the Carey Philpott Research Fund. However, it was felt that such an approach offered a more organic development and genuine representation of the challenges faced in trying to implement the bold changes being pursued. Such conflicts were resolved through negotiation to reduce the range and extent of data collection for analysis while broadening out the underpinning literature in order to ensure a robust focus on evidence-informed development.

Developing Effective Observation Practices

O'Leary (2017) argues that classroom observation is a useful tool for teacher development – but only when used to support teachers, not to sort them. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that models of observation that are non-judgemental and development-focused have the potential to remove the barriers of the traditional performative model and to reap the benefits of increased motivation, collaboration and culture of scholarship to improve teaching and learning. However, O'Leary also warns that underlying issues around professional

autonomy and the involvement of teachers in their own development adds to the complex nature of teacher evaluation. As such, there is more work to be done in ensuring that such changes have a lasting and sustainable impact upon the profession.

Haines and Miller (in: O'Leary, 2017, Ch.10) claim that video can stimulate professional dialogue and avoid the potential pitfalls of paper-based observations, which can often be considered judgemental and biased. In making the observation itself shareable with the teacher being observed, the use of video offers the individual enhanced opportunities for greater reflection and involvement in their own evaluation. With this in mind, the initial outline for this project focused on the development of self and peer review systems for teachers through the introduction of a digital observation application called VEO (Video Enhanced Observation).

Baseline Findings

To start the project, a mixed-methods questionnaire helped to baseline teacher perspectives on observation from all teachers in the research settings, as well as gathering initial thoughts on VEO. In general, these baseline findings were broadly in line with the wider literary discourse around the oppressive effects of judgement-based, performative lesson observations, although there was some recognition for the potential of observation to impact positively upon teaching and learning practices (T&L).

A summary of the baseline findings shows that:

- teachers across the MAT felt that the key purpose of observation was to 'check up' on them and to monitor performance. Further, teachers didn't view their current school's observation practices as developmental, although they did recognise that they sometimes had a positive impact on developing T&L and outcomes for children
- observations were considered a catalyst for stress and anxiety for most teachers and, whilst most teachers felt positive / open to the idea of using VEO, stress and anxiety did not disappear with the use of technology as teachers reported worries about lacking confidence to appear on video and watch themselves back

- the 'snap-shot' nature of observations were an issue for teachers who felt that they did not reflect their practice as a whole and, as such, any potential for teacher development was considered somewhat superficial
- the feedback following observation, and – importantly - the quality of this, was considered key to determining the usefulness of an observation experience
- only a minority of teachers felt in control of their observation experience and there was a neutral response recorded across the MAT regarding teachers' perception of personal involvement in the observation process

Developing Developmental Feedback and Discussion

In response to the baseline findings, research leads explored ideas around how to make better use of the professional dialogue and feedback element acknowledged by teachers as a key component for an effective observation process. Coaching was identified as the most suitable vehicle through which developmental, professional dialogue could be realised and different ways to implement this in the three schools were discussed.

Coaching is widely considered to be a solution-focused process through which the coachee will arrive at their own conclusions following questioning by a coach. The self-led and explorative nature of coaching means it is also considered to be a developmental opportunity for the individual involved. Indeed, in *Coaching for Teaching and Learning*, a guidance report funded by the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) – now known as, the Education Development Trust - concludes that:

Good coaching encourages teachers to become more reflective, articulate, exploratory and metacognitive in relation to their work and its impact on learners.

(2010.p.36)

Initially, a small group of teachers from each setting who were originally planned to act as coaching mentors - supporting and promoting the practice within their schools – participated in coaching training. However, the potential for impact through coaching was considered so

positively in two of the three schools that further training for all staff in these schools was organised in quick succession.

Mid-Point Evaluation

Field notes collected by research leads as a result of ongoing dialogue with teachers in their schools provided a continuous stream of feedback about the project as it progressed, and through this cycle it was realised that:

- the introduction of the VEO application received a disappointing response from most teachers and, as a result, there had been a general reluctance to make use of the app. In hindsight, it was recognised that this 'tool' should have perhaps been presented at a later date as research leads began to appreciate that there was important groundwork to be done around teacher's 'buy-in' of the app through an initial development of culture and ethos
- the introduction of coaching was received most positively across all schools. Indeed, it was felt that this has had the greatest impact on creating a more developmental culture and approach to teacher growth in line with those recommendations identified in the literature

Wider reading and debate by the research leads continued in response to the feedback themes being received within individual contexts and these were explored at regular meetings held between research leads and the researcher-in-residence. Alongside an interest in different methods of professional development, one of the themes which began to emerge through these meetings - as a result of both empirical data and the literature - was the idea of professional autonomy and the impact of teacher agency on professional development.

Developing Agentic Systems

In much of the literature, there is an argument that professional autonomy is hampered by too much top-down interference at all levels of the education system. However, Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2015) argue that professional autonomy is, in itself, not effective if it is not also agentic. They reason that teacher agency is an emergent phenomenon dependent upon the

relationships at play between the individual's capacity for agency (skills, knowledge, belief, etc.) and the conditions made available to them by the systems in which they exist.

In looking to develop a system which would encourage professional development through teacher self-efficacy and collaboration, a MAT-wide policy for Joint Professional Development (JPD) was introduced to help bring together the recommendations identified through this study and to create a starting point for each school to then interpret for their own context. The JPD Policy commits to:

- regular opportunities for collaborative coaching discussions between teachers
- the option for teachers to use the VEO app or peer observation for feedback from others
- Ideas Forums, where teachers come together as a professional learning community and share ideas to enhance teaching and learning practices
- Collaborative Book Reviews between teachers

Each of the three schools have taken their own approach to implementation of the JPD Policy which allows them to focus on the specific development needs of their context and the individual teachers in their setting. For instance, one school had already begun to move towards some of the activities presented in the JPD Policy prior to the project. Thus, they have focused more heavily on the development of self-led development and have introduced what they have termed Personalised Professional Development (PPD), which encompasses the features of JPD but also emphasises the need for teachers to identify their own development targets as well as being held directly responsible for the plan and actions needed to address these through appraisal. Another of the schools has been more focused on developing the activities promoted by the JPD Policy, and to ensuring they are given priority within the CPD timetable in their setting. They have also sought to raise the profile of this approach by identifying teacher responsibility through appraisal systems. The third school involved in the study has not yet fully implemented the JPD Policy and still considers VEO as the driving force of this project. Only some of the staff in this setting have been trained in coaching theory and skills following the initial Lead Coach training and so not all teachers are involved in these practices.

Final Evaluation

To conclude the project, and to ensure validity, a more formal data collection was required so, again, a questionnaire which collated both qualitative and quantitative data was designed and distributed across the three schools. As each school's response to the project had been different in some way, this questionnaire sought teachers' perspectives based on their experiences in their own school. Findings from this concluding data set showed that:

- where changes have been made in line with those suggested by this research, teacher responses have been highly positive and in line with the outcomes intended. However, where less change to practice has been made – i.e. in the third school - respondents are much less positive
- the aforementioned variance between schools can also be seen in teachers' reported beliefs that their school's newly developed approach to professional development will impact positively on both their teaching and the outcomes of their pupils
- those desirable features identified in the literature, i.e. professional autonomy / agency and collaboration, are beginning to be experienced in schools as a direct result of the work carried out through this project and the implementation of the JPD / PPD policies discussed above. Again, there is a strong correlation between these features and the level of alignment with the changes recommended by this study
- potential barriers to the success of the new approach are mainly considered by teachers to exist around: time / workload pressures; levels of support from others; and, perceived levels of rigour

Concluding Remarks

Despite its ambitious intentions and limited time-frame, this project appears to have supported the schools involved to begin movement away from performative lesson observation towards more teacher-led, developmental practices. The final response data shows that there has been a successful movement towards the aims identified in this action research cycle and that the changes brought about by this project have generally been received positively by teachers

across the MAT. As the new practices emerging from this study are further embedded within schools and across the MAT, ongoing feedback and evaluation will be required to ensure that the positives reported are maintained, and to support schools in considering whether further actions to address potential barriers are necessary.

Recommendations

Despite the ongoing nature of the cycle of action research set in motion by this project, a number of recommendations can still be drawn from the work presented here:

- To support a movement towards classroom observation being used as a tool for development as opposed to judgement-based monitoring, the process needs to be considered within a much wider approach to professional learning. One that ensures the activities related to feedback and follow-up are given suitable emphasis
- Developmental practices for teacher learning encourage individual agency and should enable practitioners to engage with the process of their own development. Coaching practices can support in this endeavour by offering the space and guidance for a professional dialogue that encourages teachers to find their own solutions and ways forward
- If policies and activities undertaken in the workplace are to exceed the superficial, it is essential that the underlying culture / ethos of a school be genuinely aligned to the rationale supporting such practices. Indeed, as has been experienced in this study through the switch of focus from VEO to coaching, it is worth investing in exploring and developing these aspects before embarking on any changes in activity
- Given the complexities involved in addressing the development needs of individuals, it is important to consider teacher development holistically and to offer a variety of opportunities for professional learning. Further, collaborative endeavours in CPD allow for the sharing of wider experiences and enable individuals access to learning normally beyond their scope of practice

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***An Investigation Parental Engagement in the Context of Social
Emotional Mental Health***

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Introduction and Rationale

This research project was hosted by Springwell SEMH Academy, a new provision, evolving through a partnership between Wellspring Academy Trust and Leeds City Council.

Working within Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) education has many challenges and one of the greatest of these is developing working relationships with parents/carers. By the time students enrol with our Academy around 80% of them have been at risk of or have experienced permanent exclusion, many of the students have been referred to a number of 'offsite provisions' and unfortunately the majority of these placements have failed. Further to this, students' needs are compounded by what they perceive as multiple rejection from the education system. As a result, students have developed an immense distrust of almost all educators and professionals who work with them when they arrive at Springwell Academy.

During enrolment and subsequent meetings with parents, such as the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) reviews, these parents express similar feelings to their children of being let down by the education system. They regularly describe professionals including educators as "they are all the same". Further to this, families have continually experienced a 'deficit model' of family and student support. That is, the support they experience has been 'done to them' as opposed to an engagement with them. Hence, parents and children start to close doors on support as they feel they have not considered the experience as collaborative including significant engagement or consideration of their son or daughter or their family circumstances or indeed their hopes and dreams. This deficit support model has had a negative impact on engagement as families start to have a lack of trust or are extremely suspicious around support offered to them. Additionally, many families learn to fear or dislike professionals because they have felt 'judged'. Although the support is well meaning, professionals develop the support

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plan believing they can make a difference but their response is often tailored or framed to 'teach' the family a new, alternative way of parenting. Therefore, it strives to turn the family unit into something that it is not or not equipped to be. The support plan can emphasise parents are not doing 'a good job' and that they are poor parents as a result of the key and continual focus upon their parenting skills. Generally, the approach is not one considering the whole family or of understanding their child's complex needs. It does not focus on aspects such as neuro science, child and brain development or on the understanding the early life trauma/experience that could have impacted upon later child development. Neither does it focus on what parenting a child with complex needs may look like. This is sometimes referred to as a 'one size fits all' approach because there is very little opportunity for families from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn about what child development may look like in the context of their child.

Working closely with parents is a key theme of Springwell Academy as we adopt a 'whole family approach'. The family are the primary carers and as such are key to understanding the needs of their child and how they view the world. So we work closely with parents by helping them to appreciate the different stages of crisis behaviours and how they can help de-escalate situations and learn from these behaviours. As a result we are asking parents to see behaviour as a 'communication of need'. The academy believes by developing and nurturing these relationships and prioritising professional trust they will see accelerated progress in all areas of their child's development. The academy models all the work they do on 'Unconditional Positive Regard' a concept developed by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. This approach holds central the concept of a basic acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says or does, especially in the context of client centred therapy. This research project offered the Academy the opportunity to test out its thinking.

Literature Review

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Benjamin Franklin

Unconditional Positive Regard is a concept developed by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. It involves a basic acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says or does, especially in the context of client-centred therapy. So what are the implications of this approach within the educational setting? One takes each individual student each day,

each moment and after every incident as it occurs while continuing to consider the student in a positive light regardless of actions. Thus viewing behaviour as a 'communication of need' and by considering the behaviour as a response that has arisen when dealing with the individual. Rogers applied this concept universally to adults, and similarly we apply this concept to the young people in our care each day. Often parents that the Academy work with may have had a poor educational experience resulting in issues such as lower levels of literacy when compared with other parents with children in mainstream school. Their experience as parents of working with educational settings may have also been poor as discussed earlier and this can influence how they work with their child's educational setting.

The majority of children who need EHCP within SEMH our setting come from white working class backgrounds. Jones (2011) discusses how over recent years there has been a tendency for the media to demonise some communities. We have also seen politicians negatively label groups through terms such as 'feckless' parents and describing their children as 'feral' particularly after the riots of 2011. A formalisation of this labelling took place through the subsequent 'Troubled Families Programme'. Many parents are unemployed and find themselves being labelled and judged as the 'underclass' or 'chavs'. It is this context that can contribute to our parents their fear of the professional. The Academy responds to this blame agenda by demonstrating unconditional positive regard at all times to both parents and students.

Jones (2011) goes on further to state:

"But the reality is that chav-hate is a lot more than snobbery. It is a class war. It is an expression of the belief that everyone should become middle class and embrace middle-class values and lifestyles, leaving those who don't to be ridiculed and hated. It is about refusing to acknowledge anything of worth in working-class Britain, and systematically ripping it to shreds in newspapers, on TV, on Facebook, and in general conversation. This is what the demonization of the working class means."

As part of Academy ethos and the continued development of this provision, it is important that all staff members understand the impact that a poorly chosen phrase, a miscommunication or a 'look of judgement' can have on the relationship with the family. They understand that fragile relationships built on foundations of mistrust and poor experience will take time and skill to

make strong. Our parents, like all parents, want to have a voice in the education of their children, they also want the best for them and they are driven by love. Not all parents are highly educated, therefore some do not have the ability to understand the terminology that is used in professional meetings. We consider it is important that professionals conduct themselves in ways that opens up a meaningful dialogue with parents as well as young people and that communication is 'two way' and that all parties see the value in high quality participation.

Methodology

Throughout this project it was important to establish high quality ethical working practices as our families are often vulnerable. The Academy staff that acted as researchers were asked to recognise their position of power as employees. Due to this factor the questionnaires and general methodology constructed followed the guidance provided by Miles and Huberman (2013) as regards both the quality research and ethical frameworks to be adopted. All students and parents became participants of their own freewill. We devised an information pack which was fully explained to each participant so they knew the principles which underpinned this research - for example that they could withdraw from the research at any time and their identities were be kept confidential.

A sample of four families that fully engaged with the research project whose outcomes would be compared with families that did not take part in the project. This seemed to be a sample that could generate quality data following reading methodological literature within the research resources available to us.

The methodology constructed, which largely generated qualitative data, followed the format of previously tried and tested approaches that have been applied within this type of setting. Questionnaires were used to collect views throughout the project. Semi-structured interviews with parents/students and staff helped assess and gain deep understanding of each young person's SEMH needs. Observations were conducted during "family days" and normal school days were used to see how the staff and family interacted as incidents arose. Support plans were then developed through engagement with the family unit. This approach intended to support parents to better understand the needs of young people. Parenting support groups and focus groups, a common research method in sociological study, were designed to allow

parents to develop a greater understanding and foster their confidence in dealing with the complexity of their child's needs. The project then supported families in understanding the different stages of crisis. We trained these parents in better understanding these stressful episodes and then measured the impact of this training through a restorative practice approach.

To measure impact the project reviewed student progress over 8 months. The areas of impact were identified by use of accepted and recognised proxy indicators such as the attendance of students, the analysis of parent participation, the number of incidents involving students, and the types of incident and the length of 'crisis' that the young people had each day. These 'crises' were analysed to gain deep insights into the possible causes.

At the end of the research project parents' thoughts and feelings were assessed by comparing their post engagement views with the survey they had completed at the start of the project. Other measures such as the views of young people and teachers were available in a similar format to the parent survey to consider changes in working relationships. The project aimed to understand:

- if families felt more empowered in dealing with behaviours;
- if young people then had a better educational experience because families had engaged in support;
- if families had 'bought into' the way the Academy works with young people;
- and if the support parents had experienced helped in dealing with incidents within the home environment.

Analysis

Observations were used and additionally an observational narrative was constructed to record incidents that happened during an hour within school time for each of the four students. Each of these observations were analysed to explore why behaviours occurred so that action plans could be co-produced with families.

A detailed depersonalised analysis of the data is available for each of the four families engaged within the research upon request.

The following key themes emerged from the analysis of the families' experiences:

- All parents care about their children and their education. When a child starts their career in education parents take pictures at the door of their child in their school uniform, this is a proud moment for them. But, for parents with children in SEMH provision, their experiences can differ from those with children in mainstream schools.
- For children with SEMH issues life can be hard within mainstream school. The environment is over stimulating the rules are difficult to follow. As their needs start to be assessed and diagnosed they start to recognise that they are different to their peers. Their behaviours are seen as naughty and undesirable and they are start to feel increasingly excluded from schooling.
- For children with SEMH that remain in mainstream school, very early contact with parents starts to take a negative turn and the support they get from school begins to feel judgemental. Parents increasingly feel the finger of blame is pointing at them.
- Transition to Springwell SEMH Academy can be damaging for young people and their families when not managed well. Parents and students have already experienced a cycle of feeling rejected, for some this starts at the early as four years of age, contributing to the view that almost all educators and practitioners associated with them consider their families in a deficit light.

As anticipated parents will engage and want to learn about their children and their needs with SEMH settings. Their voice is important in the education of their child but historically they have not felt this way. And when parents engage with education things improve, children start to attend more often, they start to engage in their own learning more and with consistent approaches to behaviour in the home and the school things improve drastically and you see children managing crisis better.

However, due to the deep-seated distrust of educators based on many negative experiences of parents or their child, there are no 'quick fixes'. The Academy staff have to earn the respect of parents in order that co-produced plans can be developed.

Conclusion

This research project has supported the development of new practice within the Academy. It has served to better inform us of how we can improve outcomes for our students. Parents have played a role in decision making within our provision since it was established just over one year ago, however we better understand the significance of this through the research. Staff and parents now discuss behaviours using the behaviour tool generated following engagement with this research. They now action plan together mutually agreeing the steps to be taken. This approach impacts at home as parents' better understand what staff are doing during the school day. Genuine collaboration and co-production is the key to changing behaviour.

The direct impact of this research is that the academy will review the staffing structure and to employ more family support workers. Our family support workers are now attending training to ensure they can work in the newly established way around understanding behaviour and reasons for crisis. Staff are using an internal support panel while being trained in observation and observational narrative so that they can lead meetings around the issues of behaviour with families.

We have learnt that the whole family is central to the Academy's ethos. Whole family participation will become the norm in every decision around the child as our provision further expands and develops in the coming years.

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