

On Saturday 30th September, a Professional Learning Conference was held in the IET Teacher Building in Glasgow.

The event was attended by 87 delegates and 11 guest speakers who were welcomed with breakfast rolls and coffee on arrival. The theme for the day was Building Teacher Leadership, and the conference was opened by EIS president Nicola Fisher, who took delegates through the order of play for the morning and got the auditorium thinking about the role of professional learning in teacher leadership. As ever, the number of teachers leading their own learning by attending conference on a Saturday morning was impressive.

Nicola spoke about the centrality of teachers to improving outcomes for young people, and the importance of professional learning in this. The EIS is committed to the provision of high quality CLPL that meets teachers' needs, and consistently finds teachers to be equally passionate about their own learning. Nicola recognised the EIS Learning Reps and their role in supporting, signposting and providing teacher learning that respond to needs in their own area. She shared the three priorities for Scotland that came out of this year's International Summit on the Teaching Profession, hosted on home soil in March this year, with leadership and professional learning front and centre, as well as a clear and developing role for the EIS:

- Professional association-led, equity-related professional learning
- Facilitating and incentivising deep professional learning
- Career pathways that reflect increased collaboration, leadership development and strengthening from the centre.

Keynote presentation: Teacher Learning and Leadership: Of, By and For Teachers

We were privileged to welcome an illustrious keynote speaker in Dr. Carol Campbell, proud Scot and Associate Professor of Leadership and Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto.

Carol began her presentation by asking the audience to consider: 'What's worth fighting for in Scottish education?' The answer she then distilled into four key Scottish values: wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. Carol's position on the International Council for Education Advisers (ICEA) has helped identify priority themes of pedagogy, leadership and collaboration. These, together with our values, are shaping how we want Scottish education to look, with people and relationships at its heart.

Teacher wellbeing is also key to improving outcomes for our pupils. We may feel this takes a back seat at times. But wellbeing is cognitive, and as professionals, we want to learn. And learning makes us feel good! Carol posited the idea that learning itself is part of our wellbeing.

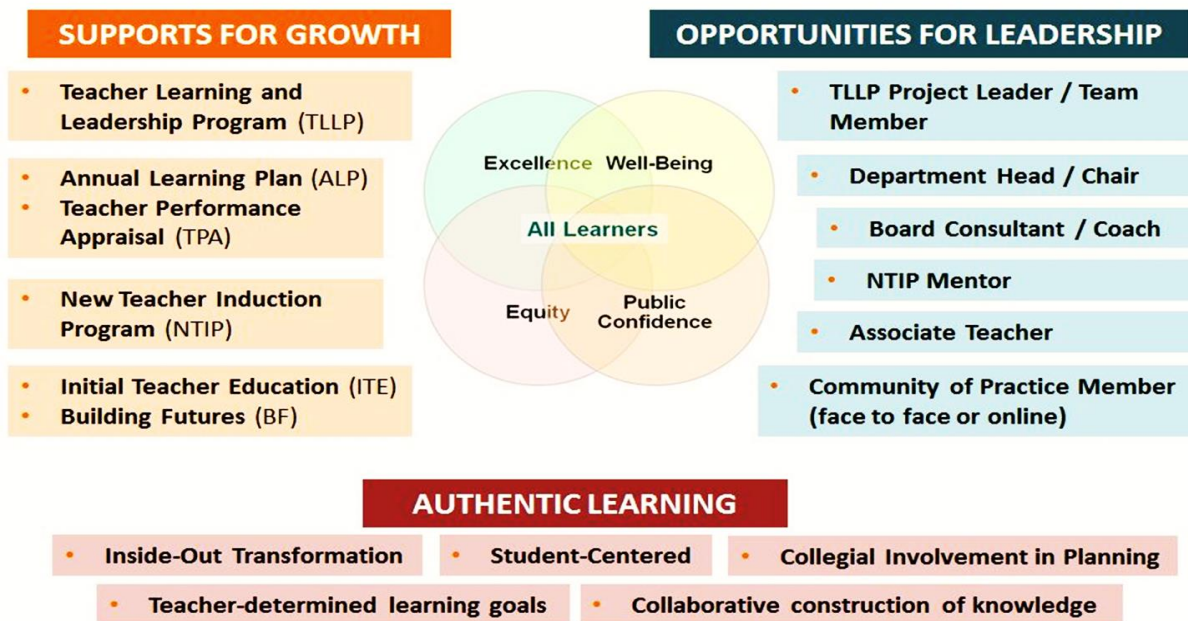
The importance of influencing and sharing

A number of delegates commented on the resonance for them of Carol's exhortation to 'exercise their influence' as teachers; leadership is not simply about titles or job descriptions but about one life influencing another. Influential educators make use of evidence informed professional judgment; they embody the collaborative professionalism of mutual respect and influence; they co-create,

mobilise, adapt and contextualise knowledge; and they seek to de-privatise practice – in order words, to share. Carol asked the audience to consider: ‘What knowledge do you have that you can share?’ and to find and make the spaces, however small, in order that sharing can happen.

Evidence-informed practice from Canada

Carol cited learning from three projects from her adopted home of Canada that sought to identify the key features of effective teacher learning. The following slide from Carol’s presentation provides an overview of the initiatives, principles and opportunities currently shaping practice.

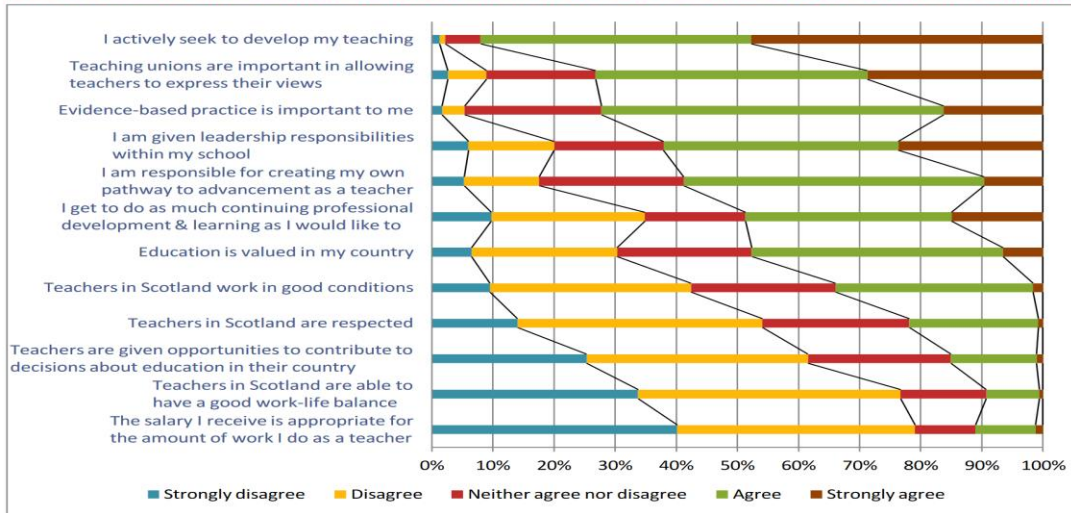


What about Scotland?

Educational International has recently published findings from a global study on teacher identities, which include both Ontario and Scotland as case studies. The summary highlights are shown below. For full details visit www.ei-ie.org/en/detail/15379/understanding-teacher-identity-in-the-21st-century



77% of teachers in Scotland do not feel they are able to have a good work-life balance



Scottish teachers value professional learning, the role of the union, evidence-based practice and opportunities for leadership. However only around half get as much time as they would like for continuing professional development. XXXXX Need an EIS perspective statement.

Teacher learning and leadership

Carol went on to talk in more depth about Ontario’s Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) which recognises the vital role of teacher development to improving outcomes. Scotland of course has a dedicated resource in the shape of the Scottish College for Leadership in Education (SCEL), widely acknowledged as providing excellent opportunities for leadership learning at all levels.

The approach of the TLLP is to support experienced teachers to undertake self-directed advanced professional development related to improved student learning; to help classroom teachers to develop leadership skills for sharing learning and exemplary practices; and to facilitate knowledge exchange for the spread and sustainability of effective and innovative practices.

Overall lessons learned from the TLLP include:

1. Prioritising teachers’ learning and leadership of, by and for teachers requires shifts in the substance and style of policy making and educational changes for teachers’ work.
2. Professional collaboration benefits from appropriate partnerships and an enabling system with conditions and support for teachers’ learning and leadership.
3. Valuing and supporting teachers taking charge of their own professional learning is integral.
4. Developing teachers as leaders of their peers’ learning and educational improvements is vital.
5. Enabling teachers as developers and mobilisers of actionable knowledge is powerful for sharing and spreading improvements in practices.

(Lieberman et al., 2017)

For more on the TLLP visit www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/teacher-learning-and-leadership-program/

Overcoming the challenges

Carol acknowledged the barriers faced by the profession in accessing meaningful CLPL within ideal socio-cultural, professional, political, economic and emotional contexts, but nonetheless drew to a close on an inspirational and motivating note, reminding teachers that professional learning is a mosaic of diverse experiences, opportunities, activities and outcomes ... and this that variation is appropriate, professional, beneficial and above all positive:

'You can do *anything!* But not *everything*. Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.'

Resources

Empowered Educators: <http://ncee.org/empowered-educators/>

Educators' Professional Learning in Canada: <https://learningforward.org/publications/canada-study>

Teacher Learning and Leadership Program: <https://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/teacher-learning-and-leadership-program/>

Workshops

Delegates had pre-selected two workshops from a choice of six; two of which were delivered by Senior Education Officers from the General Teaching Council for Scotland, on coaching and mentoring, and demystifying Professional Recognition. Upstart Scotland led Play – where learning happens! and the moderator team for Pedagoo facilitated a session on why sharing matters and the importance of professional dialogue. Kevin Lowden, a Senior Researcher with the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change, delivered a workshop on collaborative action research, and Fearghal Kelly of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership completed the workshop options with his session on teacher leadership.

Workshop 1 – Coaching and Mentoring – Elaine Napier, GTCS

This was an interactive workshop giving a snapshot of the difference between coaching and mentoring and included some useful 'takeaway' resources.

The aims were to develop skills for non-directive coaching and to practice coaching techniques and the workshop began by conversations teasing out the difference between coaching (the discussion is 'other-based' allowing self-reflection leading to solution) and mentoring (the passing on of knowledge skills and experience leading to solution).

Various activities allowed practice in coaching discussions, the importance of building relationships to ensure honest, open and confidential discussions and resources to help shape and focus those discussions were distributed. It was helpful that these resources could easily be adapted to suit classroom practice and discussion took place around a variety of other uses across sectors.

As always with workshops, a lot more time could have been spent on each small section, but many participants left knowing that they could easily use the resources the following week. That's impact.

Workshop 2 – Why sharing matters – Ciara Gibson, Lynne Jones and Sheena White, Pedagoo Moderator Team

The facilitators told the story (surely now approaching legend status) of how 'Teachmeet' was inaugurated in a pub around a decade ago, with teachers meeting (and possibly enjoying a well-deserved tippie) to share the positives and buoy each other during a time of negativity at the outset of Curriculum for Excellence. Initially there was a technology focus but this soon broadened to include all areas of teacher expertise and involved short sharing presentations of 5-7 minutes as well as online collaboration.

Out of this grew Pedagoo which offers the opportunity not just to meet and share online but also to be part of larger scale events presenting to a larger audience. The whole idea is to harness enthusiasm and positivity and to encourage practitioners to find and build time for sharing and professional dialogue. Sharing matters, including international contact online.

The facilitators shared a number of ways to get started in a non-threatening way, for example, 'Big Talk Cards', where you choose a topic from a bag and talk to your neighbour about it, or the 'Poundland Pedagogy Challenge' – using discount shop items as creatively as you can to create a classroom resource. 'Have a Wee Goo' is based on one question in one hour, for example 'How can we...?' with the question shared beforehand and time ringfenced for the discussion to take place. Finally, a 'Pedagoo Muckle' is a larger, free event for those wishing to be energised to advocate for professional dialogue and sharing in their own context to meet, share and pledge to start events locally.

Workshop 3 – Demystifying Professional Recognition – Jacqueline Morley, GTCS

Jacqueline explained that Professional Recognition is awarded to teachers displaying advanced, accomplished expertise. An enquiring approach and evidence of sustained professional learning is essential. Teachers can apply for Professional Recognition after their first year in teaching, post-probation. Professional Recognition can be awarded for completing a variety of courses as well as to individuals registering a claim by themselves.

If you are awarded Professional Recognition by the GTCS, it is valid for five years. You can then re-apply if you so choose. Evaluators are looking for evidence that you have critically examined, analysed and evaluated the impact of your research and implementation.

Jacqueline included a number of discussion activities in her workshop and ended it by answering questions from several delegates.

Workshop 4 – What is teacher leadership? – Fearghal Kelly, SCEL

Fearghal started by asking the group to consider three questions throughout: What does teacher leadership mean to me in my context? In what ways are we already leading practice? In what ways will we further enhance our approaches to leading practice? He gave a brief exposition of SCEL and its values – quality, confidence, creativity, courage and equity – what it does and how far it has come.

A discussion followed on barriers to leadership with the group identifying time, money, resources, workload, and, importantly teachers' perceptions of themselves, as quite often they may not see themselves as a leader. But, if we can understand that leading is about collaborating, then it feels

more doable and rewarding. Investment in time for professional learning is key, as is confidence, and coaching can really help support this.

The group were then asked to consider the purpose of education. The responses they gave, surprisingly for some, were perfectly captured by the detailed descriptions of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. They then thought about a teacher who inspired them and the qualities embodied by that person – all signifiers of a leader.

SCEL produced *Developing Teacher Leadership* in 2016, based on a huge engagement process involving conversations around the country to find out what teachers thought about their leadership roles. You can find it here: <http://bit.ly/teachleadreport>. The report formed the basis for SCEL's teacher leadership framework and online resource. The importance of practitioner enquiry came through strongly too.

Fearghal left his group with a fundamental question: 'What do we want to be different for our young people – and how do we get there?'

“Teacher leadership is the ownership and collective responsibility for student and professional learning within a school.”

Ryan et al., 2016

Workshop 5 – Play – where learning happens! – Sue Palmer, Kate Johnston, Martine Leitch, Upstart Scotland

Sue began by pointing out that research has suggested that play is in our DNA and it is crucial to human development. Play is said to be our in-born learning aid to creativity, problem solving skills, communication and social skills, a love of learning, self-regulation and resilience.

Play provides opportunities to develop spoken language and social skills and to build sound foundations for academic achievement. In the past children used their imaginations and problem-solving skills to recreate or make what they found in their outdoor and indoor environments into objects etc for play amongst themselves. Now they tend to play at home, sitting down, or are adult-directed, with lots of bought equipment/toys.

Sue showed evidence from recent surveys that play, particularly outdoor play, did not happen as much as it had and that the health and wellbeing of pupils, emotionally and physically, was deteriorating. It is argued that there is a causal link.

Although it is accepted that play is important in a child's development, little research has been undertaken on how schools might put play at their centre. Harvard Graduate School of Education is undertaking the Pedagogy of Play project at present to create a framework to support educators in Denmark bring more play and playfulness into a school. They are looking also at what playful learning involves in South Africa.

Once a child starts primary school, the play element in her/his life tends to be reduced. Recent PISA results (2016) provides evidence to show that in countries which are judged to be more successful than the UK, in 66% of them, pupils start school at 6 and in those countries where pupils begin school at 7 they do even better.

Kate gave a presentation entitled 'My heroes', providing a gallery of influential individuals, including Maria Montessori, Friedrich Froebel and Robert Owen, whose ideas have been important. She

believes the Forest Schools programme, Nordic Kindergartens, and the Te Whariki curriculum in New Zealand are current key developments.

Martine told us of her school's previous concerns about the reduction in literacy amongst pupils. The approach being taken in the Early Years didn't seem to be working. They decided to de-clutter the curriculum and introduce real play, not active learning. They were influenced by the work of Anna Croft and her ideas of 'possibility thinking' (creatively find a way around a problem).

The school is in its second year now of implementing their Froebelian approach; the children are co-constructors of what is done. They have natural resources in the play spaces. Enquiry-based learning led by the children is what happens. Staff understand the 12 Features of Play. The approach has enabled vocabulary to be developed and this has raised attainment already in last session's P1.

Parents were concerned at first as no reading books or words etc had been given out to their children but they now see the value of the approach, as do the nurseries that feed into the school.

Martine highlighted the contradiction between what was supported in policy terms by the Scottish Govt, as in *Building the Curriculum 2* and *Building the Ambition*, and how the schooling system makes it difficult to deliver. However, HMIe has seen the evidence the school has and commended the approach.



Workshop 6 – Collaborative action research - Kevin Lowden, the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change

Kevin shared findings from The School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP), which was a three-year, solution-focused approach to Scotland's attainment issues with a focus on innovating to tackle educational inequality. The programme aimed to encourage staff to learn from each other, experiment with their practice and monitor and evaluate change.

School Improvement Partnerships were action research programmes involving a process of collaborative inquiry which created leadership opportunities and professional learning. A key feature of the SIPP was the support provided by ROC to evaluate and build practitioners' capacity to conduct collaborative enquiry. Review stages were built in to allow reflection and adaptation where required.

Education Scotland worked with local authorities and ROC researchers to broker and facilitate these partnerships within and across schools and local authorities. The approach was underpinned by systematic enquiry and the use of evidence. Projects were locally owned and led by teachers and school leaders working with like-minded professionals.

The SIPP was about instigating cultural change and so more time is needed to see if it can effect long term changes in the attainment gap, for example. But findings from the programme tell us that collaborative enquiry must be built into the system to be effective and sustainable, and where engagement is high, impact is greatest. Opportunities to lead collaboration should be open to teachers at all levels and go beyond one school or system.

The range of positive developments and impact demonstrate that the underlying principles for collaborative enquiry to tackle educational inequity provides a positive way forward.

Vote of thanks

Sonia Kordiak, the Convener of the EIS CPD Sub-Committee, closed the conference by thanking all the speakers and delegates present, as well as the Education and Equality Team at EIS HQ who worked hard behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of the event. Sonia also thanked staff at the IET Teacher Building for their support throughout the planning period and on the day.

Special thanks were extended to EIS Learning Reps Donal Hurley and Harry Kilgour, and CPD Sub Committee members Karen Farrell, Rob Mackay and Paula McEwan for their help signposting to and notetaking in the workshops.

EIS president Nicola Fisher presented Carol Campbell with a memento of her visit to Scotland with sincere thanks for her inspirational keynote and our best wishes – a traditional Scottish Quaich engraved with words by Scots poet Alexander Scott, esteemed as having helped found the only independent department for the study of Scottish literature, at the University of Glasgow:

Scotch Education

'A tellt ye.

A tellt ye.'