



# SCEL

Scottish College for  
Educational Leadership

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## Research Brief 1

### The development of leadership capacities across the career trajectory: a focus upon policy

**Leadership** has been conceptualised in many different ways over the years from the authoritarian to the visionary leader and from top-down to bottom-up approaches but **why leadership at all levels and why now?** Since the millennium there has been an increasing focus upon teacher professionalism reflected within 'A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (The McCrone report on teachers' conditions of service) [2]; 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (The Donaldson Review of Teacher

Education) [1]; and the 'Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland' (The McCormac Review) [3]. Stressed within these reports is the need for continual professional development for teachers, an emphasis upon leadership and the importance of partnership working between schools, local authorities and Teacher Education Institutions. These recommendations are paralleled within recent developments with regard to the development of a set of new standards for teacher registration which reflect the

different stages of teachers' professional development [4-7]; the development of professional update (August 2014); revised guidance on Professional Development and Review (PDR); and the development of a Scottish Framework for Masters in Education [8]. With regard specifically to leadership development there has also been the establishment of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL); the Framework for Educational Leadership [9]; and the SCEL Fellowship programme for experienced school leaders. But

#### Teaching Scotland's Future

Scottish education needs to develop leadership attributes in all staff as well as identifying and supporting systematically its future headteachers. ... International experience suggests that good education systems identify effective leaders for today; high-performing systems grow and develop tomorrow's leaders in a planned and progressive way. (79) Scottish Government, *Teaching Scotland's Future*. 2010, HMSO: Edinburgh.

‘Our aspiration is to support the development of a world class education system with world class leadership and development.’

[10] (Point 55)

‘The most successful education systems invest in developing their teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who are able, not simply to teach successfully in relation to current external expectations, but who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexities of education and to be key actors in shaping and leading educational change.’ [1] (14)

They spend more time coaching and developing their teaching staff, and interacting with students and pupils. They help each other and establish networks and clusters, which they then use for learning and development, and providing support to weaker schools’ [1] (79)

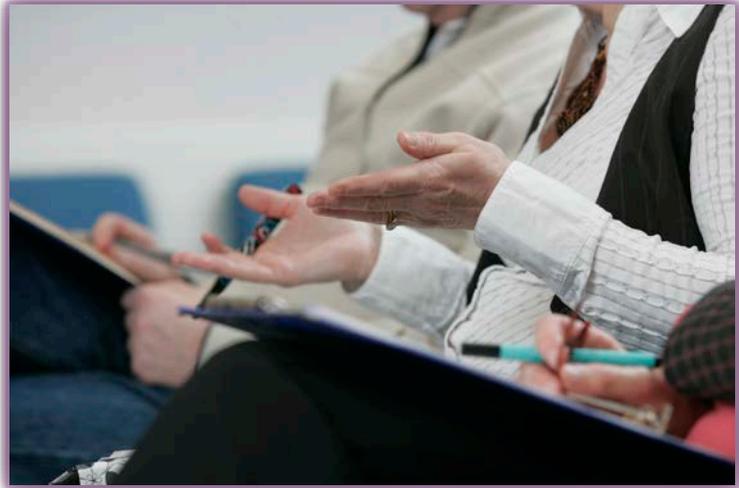
### Reflection Points

*Are there opportunities to exercise leadership at all levels of professional development within your school?*

*What would you consider might be the right conditions under which leadership at all levels could flourish in your school?*

*In which ways do you develop your own leadership capabilities and develop them in others?*

*What would you consider to be the attributes of an effective leader?*



## The importance of building capacity

what are the drivers for change which are leading us away from the notion of leadership as positional, residing with an individual (the Headteacher) or a select team (the Senior Management/Leadership Team) to one in which it is envisaged that all can exercise leadership, contribute as leaders and can develop leadership attributes and capacities as implied in the quote below?

### **Towards a world-class education system**

One of the key drivers of change has been the need to build a world-class education system which stands up well to international scrutiny and comparisons: this means investing in the professional development of teachers.

This is a vision of the professional teacher as someone who not only responds to government policies but who is also a key factor in influencing such policies. Donaldson draws from McKinsey *et al.* [11] to observe that, apart from good

quality teaching, nothing influences school standards more than the quality of headteachers – they spend a lot of their time capacity building at both local and systems levels [see panel left].

The McKinsey report [12] examined the performance of twenty school systems across the world which demonstrated improvement and categorised four forms of intervention which led to such improvement. Within the ‘good to great’ category there was a focus upon ‘ensuring teaching and school leadership is regarded as a full-fledged profession.’ This entails setting up clear professional pathways. Within the ‘great to excellent’ category there was a shift of focus from the centre to schools themselves with a focus upon ‘peer-based learning through school-based and system-wide interaction, as well as supporting system-sponsored innovation and experimentation.’ (14) Thus, it can be seen that there is a focus upon systems leadership

whilst also recognising the importance of ‘bottom-up’ developments and school and teacher autonomy.

**Addressing inadequacies within the system**

Donaldson draws attention to inadequacies with regard to support for the professional development of teachers in the early stages beyond the probationary period – ‘the link to learning in the early phase of teacher education remains tenuous at best, it often does not address either individual or wider priorities well enough, and too much of current provision has failed to impact significantly on children’s learning.’ [1] (67)

Likewise, he observes that few Local Authorities provided coherent leadership routes for middle managers wishing to progress to senior management (79) and that leadership education for experienced Headteachers was inadequate (80). Provision for those who were undertaking leadership education (principally those preparing for Headship) were ‘not well coordinated, with a range of disparate sources of leadership

support across a range of national and local providers.’ (82). He argues for a more co-ordinated approach towards leadership development (82) and for the development of ‘A clear, progressive educational leadership pathway ... which embodies the responsibility of all leaders to build the professional capacity of staff and ensure a positive impact on young people’s learning.’ (79)

The report of the National Partnership Group (NPG) which was set up to make recommendations regarding implementation of the Donaldson review [10] endorses the above and highlights the importance of professional learning in achieving the desired aims [see shaded panel right].

**The professional role of the teacher in building capacity**

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) emphasises leadership development across the stages, reflected in the new suite of Professional Standards.

The GTCS 2013 publication, ‘Securing high levels of teacher professionalism’ [7] argues that it

is the ‘quality of teaching which most strongly influences levels of pupil motivation and achievement’ and that this, in turn, is influenced by the ‘quality of leadership’ which impacts upon teacher motivation and expectations. (4.4) Likewise, the ‘Standards for Registration’ [5]



GTCS Standards

**NPG Report**

‘High quality leadership is crucial to improving the experiences and outcomes for learners. All teachers in all settings will have a role to play in leadership whether in terms of curriculum development, school management or working on discrete projects across a school or local authority area. Recently there has been greater recognition that all teachers undertake leadership roles, and also that those who occupy formal leadership positions need to give high priority to professional learning.’ [10] (Point 51)

In Scotland, we expect all teachers to be leaders in a number of important ways. We expect them to lead learning for, and with, all learners with whom they engage and to develop the capacity to lead colleagues and other partners to achieve change through specific projects or development work.’ [4] (2)

**Key Messages**

- ❖ The strength of the school community rests on the extent to which leadership capacity is developed for all.
- ❖ The importance of adopting a capability perspective on leadership and creating the right conditions under which it can flourish.
- ❖ The need to keep the quality of pupil learning to the forefront of all leadership development.
- ❖ The need to build capacity at the individual and systems level.

### A pragmatic response to demand

Donaldson notes that, despite the implementation of the 'Scottish Qualification for Headship' and the 'Flexible Route to Headship' programmes, there is still a shortage of those willing, able and suitably qualified to take on the role of Headship in Scottish schools. The imperative therefore is to identify leadership potential at an early stage and provide opportunities to nurture it.

### Towards a capability perspective on leadership

If leadership is perceived as a series of inherent, stable traits rather than a potential which lies within all of us which, if the right

conditions prevail, can be nurtured and developed, then it is possible to perceive leadership as something which pertains to the few rather than to the many. The former is embodied in the vision of the 'heroic leader' - the 'William Wallace' who leads us into battle. Thus it can be seen that to embrace this more inclusive understanding of leadership calls for a fundamental paradigm shift as to what constitutes leadership and 'leaderly behaviour', moving away from narrow understandings of the concepts.

### A pragmatic response to an ever-widening role for education

As education has become politicised, the expectations upon

schools as agents of social change have grown exponentially [13] with schools taking forward agendas such as 'The Rights Respecting School' and moving to a position of inclusion for all. In many respects this is to be welcomed but it brings with it increasing complexity and demands upon school leadership teams with often competing imperatives. Such a context provides ample opportunities to nurture innovation and development, enabling staff at all stages of their professional careers to take on leadership roles within the school, building capability and capacity within the school and fostering collegiality and distributed leadership.

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5. General Teaching Council for Scotland, *The Standards for Registration*. 2012.
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10. National Partnership Group, *Teaching Scotland's Future - National Partnership Group Report to Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning*. 2012.
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## Leaderly Behaviour

'People have to make an active decision to be a leader – it is not achieved merely by virtue of position. An individual must choose to do leaderly things and think and feel in a leaderly way. In other words, people volunteer that discretionary effort or their full engagement in the task required and this is quite distinct from the minimum level of movement or compliance required to do the job.' [13] (18)

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