



## Research Brief 3

# The development of leadership capacities across the career trajectory: an international perspective

The first two papers in this series posed the questions, **Why leadership at all levels?** and **Why now?**, drawing from the Scottish policy context and changing conceptualisations of leadership over time. This paper focusses upon the international perspective, drawing from the **OECD** [Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development] Report, **'Preparing teachers and developing school leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Lessons from around the world.'** [1] The report draws from the OECD's 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA) (2009) [2] and poses a set of key

questions [see panel right].

### Why Now?

The report contrasts the needs that formerly drove education systems across the world with those that are required today and in the future to enable young people to take their place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and make a meaningful contribution to society [see panel below]. In order to achieve this end, it argues that education systems need to transform themselves such that there is recognition of the professional role of teachers. (11)

### Key Questions

OECD Report, 2012

What are the skills that young people demand in this rapidly changing world and what competencies do teachers need to effectively teach those skills?

What can teacher preparation and continuing professional development do to prepare graduates to teach well in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom?

What are the different roles and responsibilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century school leaders and how do countries succeed in developing these leaders? [Foreword, p.3]

## Past

- Provision
- Delivered Wisdom
- Teachers working in solitude
- Prescription
- 'One-size-fits-all' approaches
- Standardisation and conformity
- Curriculum-centred

## Today and Future

- Outcomes
- Fostering user-generated wisdom
- Teachers collaborating together
- Autonomy based upon clear goals
- Embracing diversity
- Ingenuity and personalisation
- Learner-centred

‘The kind of teaching needed today requires teachers to be high-level knowledge workers who constantly advance their own professional knowledge as well as that of their profession. But people who see themselves as knowledge workers are not attracted by schools organized like an assembly line, with teachers working as interchangeable widgets in a bureaucratic command-and-control environment.’ (3)



## A changing profile of school leadership

In many countries, the role of the school leader has developed in response to the granting of greater autonomy to schools. This has implications for the need for clear role definition, for continuous professional development, and acknowledgement of the pivotal role of the school leader in effecting school improvement. (13)

### Why Leadership at all levels?

A feature of high performing and equitable school systems is the granting of greater autonomy to schools across areas such as curricular and assessment systems; market-oriented governance; and collaboration between schools and other stakeholders. However, the 2012 OECD report argues that this is dependent upon effective leadership at **all** levels of the school and strong support systems, requiring distributed leadership, professional development for school leaders, and incentives for performance.

### The Role of the school leader

Central to effective leadership is a focus upon ‘supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality.’ (18) Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within the school is assuming greater importance for school leaders who

play a key role in promoting professional learning and development within their schools. Increasingly, there is a focus upon in-house professional development, facilitated by local authorities and school leaders, linked to the development priorities of the school. Fostering collaborative work cultures across schools is also seen as

fundamental to the role of the school leader. (14-19)

A further important aspect of the School Leaders’ role is ‘aligning instruction with external standards, setting goals for student performance,’ monitoring progress and making adaptations to the curriculum to improve performance. (19)

### A Case Study: Ontario – Improving education through more effective school leaders

With the election of a new government in 2004, the provincial government of Ontario designed and implemented an education-improvement strategy (Energizing Ontario Education) that focused on three main goals: raising the level of student achievement; narrowing the gaps in student achievement; and increasing public confidence in publicly funded education.

To meet its goals, Ontario developed a coherent leadership strategy, adequate contextual support frameworks and concerted actions to include key actors, such as school boards, teachers’ unions, academics and practitioners, in the reform process. Within the strategy, a specific leadership framework defines five domains for effective leaders: setting direction; building relationships and developing people; developing the organization; leading the instructional program; and being accountable.

The leadership strategy focuses on attracting good candidates, preparing them for their tasks, and supporting them as they work to improve the quality of instruction. School boards overtly plan for leadership succession. The process of attracting and preparing the right people begins before there is a vacancy to be filled. ... Mentoring is available during the first two years of practice for principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers and directors. Principals and vice-principals are required to maintain an annual growth plan, and their performance is appraised every five years, based on student achievement and well-being. Box 1.1 [Edited

# Developing Leadership for Tomorrow's Education Systems

“For accountability systems to lead to improvements, they need to focus on information relevant to teaching and learning, motivate individuals and schools to use that information to improve practice, and build the knowledge necessary for interpreting and applying the information. That requires the participation of school leaders who are skilled in interpreting test results and in using data to plan and design appropriate strategies for improvement. It also demands that school leaders involve their staff in the use of accountability data in order to strengthen professional learning communities within schools and engage those who need to change their practice.” (29)

The alignment of resources with pedagogical purpose is also crucial although it was noted that school leaders often had to spend disproportionate periods of time on operational issues, deflecting them away from a strategic overview. (20)

As a consequence of the greater responsibility and accountability demanded of school leaders, there is a need to distribute leadership effectively across and within the school. This means establishing networks within the school based upon more flexible groupings to encourage a distribution of power such that teachers can adopt leading roles in relation to pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, evaluation and student behaviour, leading to the development of a greater sense of teacher self-efficacy and playing an important role in school development and improvement. (22)

## Effective Leadership Programmes

Effective leadership programmes provide opportunities for networking, facilitating collaborative problem-solving. Coaching and mentoring often play an important role in supporting school leaders. (28) However, inadequacies in leadership programmes across the OECD countries were identified with

school leaders feeling ill-prepared to take on their roles. The report advocates that professional development for school leaders should be ‘ongoing, career-staged and seamless.’ (26) This is particularly of the essence in countries where considerable autonomy is afforded of school leaders. (Ibid.)

Many OECD countries offer pre-service leadership training through award-bearing courses but there is dispute as to whether such courses should be mandatory. Once in post, induction training is often offered to school leaders but this is also often optional. The OECD report argues that In-Service training should be available to school leadership teams to enable them to ‘update their skills and/or share new practices.’ [27-28]

## Features of the most innovative leadership programmes

- ❖ prepare and develop school leaders using innovative approaches that address the broader roles and responsibilities of leaders and the purposes of schooling, and that use core technologies to achieve intended outcomes;
- ❖ are designed to produce leaders who work to build student-centered schools with the capacity for high performance and continuous improvement towards that end; and
- ❖ take a system-wide perspective, so that the programs are aligned with the larger goals and processes of the system concerning school improvement, student performance, and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. (22) (citing [3])

## Key Messages

- ❖ Recognition of changing imperatives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the implications of such for schooling and school leadership.
- ❖ High performing and equitable education systems are characterised by the granting of greater autonomy to schools.
- ❖ A focus upon systems and distributive leadership in order to effect improvement at the system and school level, fostering partnerships and collaboration between, across and beyond schools.
- ❖ Recognition of the pivotal role which school leaders play in effecting school improvement, supported by a highly professional workforce.
- ❖ The need for high quality professional development across **all** stages of the career trajectory for **all** teachers and school leaders.

## Reflection Points

### *Reflecting upon the 3 key OECD questions*

- ❖ How would you answer the three key questions which informed the OECD report? [p1, shaded column right]

### *Reflecting upon changing needs for education systems internationally*

- ❖ Examine the comparative table at the bottom of p.1.
- ❖ Do you agree with this analysis? What evidence would you forward in support of your argument?
- ❖ How representative of Curriculum for Excellence is the right column?
- ❖ What steps should the Scottish government and local authorities take to be more representative of the right column?
- ❖ How representative of your school is the right column?
- ❖ What steps would your school need to take to be more representative of the right column?

### *Reflecting upon schools as organisations*

- ❖ Examine the quote on p.2. [top left column]. Do you recognise this picture of schools as being 'organized like an assembly line'? How much truth is there in this portrayal?

### *Reflecting upon leadership development and modes of leadership*

- ❖ To what an extent are there opportunities for collaboration and networking not only within your school but beyond it? How might this be fostered?
- ❖ Is there sufficient leadership development of a high quality for school leaders already in post? How might this be fostered?
- ❖ To what extent is the essence of this report represented within Scottish policy and documentation as it pertains to leadership?
- ❖ Is there a potential clash between systems-wide leadership and distributed leadership? Can they work in harmony with each other?

Most countries formally appraise school leaders through systematic performance-appraisal processes. The report identifies important pre-requisites if such processes are to lead to school improvement [panel left]. (29)

## Preparing Teachers: Delivery of 21st Century Skills

There have been systematic attempts across the world to improve the quality of education (supported by a range of frameworks) with the aim of preparing children for the educational demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The demands upon teachers are high. They require a wide repertoire of approaches and the expertise to know how and in which circumstances they should be applied, taking account of individual contexts. Teachers not only require a sound understanding of how children learn but also an understanding of the affective and social aspects of their students. Teachers need to collaborate widely in a range of networks and partnerships. They also need to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills to be able to use technology effectively within the classroom and as a means of tracking student learning. A strong eco-system to support the professional development of teachers needs to be established, drawing from innovations derived from research and evaluation; those inspired by business through the development of new products and services; those derived by practitioners; and by users (students, parents, communities). (52)

## References

1. OECD, *Preparing teachers and developing school leaders for the 21st century: Lessons from around the world*. 2012, OECD Publishing.
2. Pont, B., D. Nusche and H. Moorman (2008), *Improving School Leadership: Volume 2: Case Studies on System Leadership*, OECD Publishing.
3. OECD, *Pisa 2009 Results: Executive Summary*. 2010, OECD Publishing.

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