

BELMAS LEADERSHIP PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT RIG

REPORT OF 8th NOVEMBER 2018 EVENT, UNIVERSITY OF DERBY.

COMMISSIONING LEADERSHIP PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION IN A SELF- IMPROVING SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Rationale for the day

Concerns about commissioning LPD in a so-called 'self –improving' school system had first arisen in a RIG roundtable discussion in November 2017 with the issue of Quality Assurance seen as paramount. This event was intended to update thinking about practice and research in the area of commissioning by (a) inviting practitioners from different contexts to talk about their local practice, (b) to introduce a current large scale research study that analysed the policy context at national level against which this practice was taking place and (c) to draw out key themes, issues and questions arising from the presentations that might inform a future research agenda.

Practitioner presentations

Practitioner presentations included the perspectives of (1) a stand alone LA maintained secondary school. (2) a small Teaching School serving 13 other secondaries and (3) a large organisation providing LPD services to 5 MATs encompassing 320+ schools . Presenters were given a common brief of 6 aspects for describing and reflecting on their commissioning experience which included context, priority focus, commissioning processes, content, resourcing and overall observations

Ash Venkatesh, Headteacher of Littleover Community School, a LA maintained Secondary school, recognised the challenges of accessing up to date research to inform home grown provision and motivating staff in late career. Tracey Dundas, Manager of Altius Teaching School Alliance, which has a significant pool of SLE's, wondered about the QA of system leaders, while Graeme Robins, representing the MATS, as Director of QA and Programme Development of *Inspiring Leaders* a not for profit partnership company, offered new insights into governance structures and processes in large scale LPD provider operations.

Research presentation

The research presentation was made by Rob Higham, Senior Lecturer at UCL and co-author, with Toby Greany, of *Hierarchy, Markets and Networks: analysing the self-improving school-led system agenda in England and the implication for schools* (UCL press, 2018). In his report, Rob outlined models of organising LPD that included:-

- a middle tier of MATS, TSA's, Dioceses and private providers coordinated by RSC's at regional and sub regional level with LA's relegated to helping guide some of the decision- making.
- LA EIPs. LPD provision core funded by annual subscription from member schools run by external consultants and schools accredited by the EIP for their expertise in particular areas.
- Secondaries working on collaborative exchange and /or buying services from schools as well as consultants, companies and LA.

He also analysed the dynamics of 'protecting', 'selling' or 'sharing' LPD and their respective tensions, Where knowledge and expertise are 'sold', there is a tendency to focus on the kinds of knowledge that can be easily codified and commodified (as 'best practice') often to meet demands of the accountability system, rather than on the kinds of development that support growth. He called for the need to help school leaders clearly articulate approaches for how they identified, developed, and shared evidence, knowledge and /or expertise across their schools so that it genuinely changed practice. and to 'reshape the system to encourage more effective and inclusive forms of knowledge development and mobilisation.' In short, 'a new economy of knowledge' as the report puts it, for the building of leadership capacity and the 'transfer' of leadership knowledge.

Themes, issues and questions arising from the presentations

Referring back to the Greany and Higham report, the danger of codified and commodified LPD squeezing out more shared developmental work in a marketised system led to discussion of whether there was a 'continuum' between collaborative CPD, including Joint Practice development and commercialised/ marketised provision. The issue was how far these two were compatible and the question: if they can exist side by side what forms of organisation would facilitate this? This line of thinking did not see the word 'commissioning' in the title as helpful as it suggested a marketised/ transactional approach.

Other discussion focussed on LPD QA issues, particularly in MAT environments, with questions being raised about impact, outcomes and consistency of provision. and how different needs and context of schools influence CPD/LPD. QA issues also generated a cluster of questions around LPD for school to school support, as follows:-

In a school -led system to what extent does context influence how one leadership can support improvement in another context? (or are outstanding schools necessarily good at helping struggling schools?) What is the Impact of 'outstanding' on recruitment to leadership roles? What LPD do outstanding schools need to help other schools? In TSAs, what QA exists for SLE's offering school to school support?

The themes of a 'new knowledge economy' and equality and legitimacy in the Greany and Higham report also raised questions around how leaders access, process, understand and apply LPD support /knowledge in different contexts, and on the impact of principles of collegiality/ pay equality across leadership positions on recruitment to leadership posts..

Ideas for future research projects.

A number of ideas for future research projects arose from discussion of the presentations.

- 1 The roles of MAT CEO's and their LPD needs
- 2 Best practice in the leadership and management of MATS. (there was a suggestion that Rob's presentation did not do justice to good practice where it exists. Of course, this implies looking at MATs in isolation. Rob and Toby's work looked at the interaction of schools and MATS
- 3 More research on models of LPD development in groups of schools (if we don't like the word 'commissioning') emerging from the 'sell, share, protect' dynamic of the research report.
- 4 QA of SLE's offering school to school support.in TSAs.
.....and, finally, a perennial LPD concern, not necessarily linked to a self-improving system.
- 5 Revisiting the motivation of staff in late career, and how performance management conversations influence leadership role uptake.

Related current projects and RIG agendas.

The interest in QA of LPD, arising from the presentations and subsequent discussions may well be served by a related research project, on developing a QA system for teacher CPD, currently under way and due to report findings from its first stage (Evidence base and consultation with stakeholders) in January 2019. The project is funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation, who have commissioned the Chartered College, alongside the Teacher Development Trust and Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University to undertake the work.

We attended one of the consultation workshops in November 2018 before our meeting and three aspects of the work in progress seemed immediately relevant to our concerns, and to the briefs we gave for the practitioner presentations. One was the elements being considered for a CPD QA system, which, apart from context, were **purpose** (*to reward, regulate or recognise?*), **governance** (*who's organising?*), **process** (*what is being quality assured.. programs, providers organisations?*) **definitions** (*and their criteria?*) and **value** (*who pays and how?*) The second was the design principles of a CPD QA system, which included:-

'the enabling of efficient and effective use by school leaders and teachers to aid their decision-making and commissioning regarding CPD, to understand the evidence behind the quality measures and to inform the quality assurance of in-school CPD'

...And the third is the foremost purpose of the project:- 'to provide school leaders and teachers with an easy to use system for finding high quality, impactful CPD /LPD by ensuring, via a feasibility study, that the widest range of providers would be incentivised to participate in the quality assurance process..

For those of you interested in future research implications of the Greany and Higham The other BELMAS RIG agenda relevant to this meeting will be that of the Structural Reform RIG, which will be considering the report in full on 26 November 2018, with a following report of the meeting on the BELMAS website.

November 2018

BELMAS Leadership Preparation and Development RIG

Co-convenors

Deb Outhwaite

Ann Kendrick

Paul Close