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LLSE Case Study: A whole trust approach to teacher development

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Introduction

We know from evidence that the quality of teaching in the classroom accounts for at least 30% of the variance of a pupil's progress in school (Hattie, 2003; Huberman et al., 2014). Most school leaders would not dispute that classroom-based staff are vital to pupils' learning, and ensuring those staff are competent and confident in effective teaching is a professional development priority. As a consequence, on average, UK teachers spend approximately 10.5 days per year engaged in learning activities (Sellen, 2016).

Unfortunately, not all teacher professional development is created equally, at least in terms of its impact on pupil outcomes (Collin and Smith, 2021). A study by the Learning Policy Institute found that teacher professional development was most effective when it was content focused, involved active learning, supported collaboration, used models of effective practice, provided coaching and expert support, offered feedback and reflection and, was of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017).

An independent review of professional development (Ofsted, 2024b) found that the most effective schools use innovative approaches to providing teachers with high quality professional development. However, while in theory, a sustained, collaborative, content focused professional development programme is ideal, we also know that workload pressures make whole school professional development challenging to implement (Ofsted, 2024a) and that the logistical issues around releasing all staff simultaneously can be prohibitive.

One programme which has continuously had the support of successive governments for the development of teachers is the suite of National Professional Qualifications. Research (Ofsted, 2024b) suggests that the National Professional Qualifications are highly valued by those who take them. However, the National Professional Qualifications are often seen as very individualistic pursuits, supporting participants to progress into new roles and responsibilities, and equipping them with the specific knowledge and skills required at each career stage. As a result, the NPQs are often overlooked as a potential whole school professional development model.

However, in February 2024, The Empower Multi-Academy Trust, supported by the Alliance of Leading Learning and LLSE, embarked on an ambitious programme to put all its class-based staff through the National Professional Qualification for Leading Teaching (NPQLT) training. The Shropshire based Multi-Academy Trust set themselves the ambitious goal of upskilling every class-based staff member in their 8 schools in the leadership of teaching.

The programme is now mid-way through, and this case study aims to examine the benefits and challenges perceived by the trust, schools and participants at the mid-point. It also aims to draw out some of the lessons learnt to date, in order to enable other trusts wishing to embark on a similar approach to navigate some of the challenges.

The case study indicates that at the midpoint there have been a range of positive outcomes in terms of quality of teaching, increased staff competence and confidence, collaboration and collegiality across the MAT and school improvement processes. It highlights the importance of managing workload associated with similar programmes, managing the logistical challenges, getting the strategic and operational communications right, and identifying the right partners to support the delivery.

The Context

The Empower Multi-Academy Trust is a Primary phase trust made up of eight schools based across Shropshire. The trust was established in 2018 and is led by CEO Carla

Whelan. Carla joined the trust in 2023 and is supported by a central leadership team of educational and operations professionals. Around 25% of the pupils in the MAT are eligible for Free School Meals, although the schools range from around 10% of eligible pupils to 60%.

Prior to 2023, the eight schools in the empower MAT all had separate school improvement processes and managed them in isolation. Initial evaluations highlighted a common focus across all schools: the need to strengthen teaching and learning (T&L). This led to a first collaborative project, 'FAME,' which was designed to build a unified approach to defining excellence in the classroom. The FAME approach is a teaching methodology developed by the Education Endowment Foundation (Pritchard, 2022) which emphasises the use of worked examples. The underpinning theory posits that by utilising Framing, Asking and Assessing, Modelling and Explanation/Enhancing teachers can support pupils through worked examples, differentiating support based on prior knowledge. Through FAME, the trust developed shared practices and policies to ensure alignment, recognising that a whole-trust approach could support its vision for excellence. Prior to beginning the process of focusing on teaching, outcomes were broadly below national averages.

The MAT vision is to deliver a training programme which impacts every classroom, and which supports every teacher and classroom-based support staff practitioner to develop, whatever their career stage. By involving all schools and all class-based staff, the intention is to have a shared understanding of what excellence in the leadership of teaching is.

The National Professional Qualification in Leading teaching (NPQLT) is a 12-month programme aimed at supporting class-room practitioners who have, or are aspiring to have, responsibilities for leading teaching in a specific area, subject, year group, key stage or phase. LLSE have designed the NPQLT course to be comprised of three modules and include a mix of live training, online learning and group coaching, as well as requiring participants to maintain their own reflective learning journal. The awarding body for the qualification is the Department for Education in England. The qualification is available to teachers and support staff in England, and teachers in international contexts (including other countries within the United Kingdom).

The key topics covered over the course of the three modules are:

- Effective teaching
- School culture
- Knowledge of how pupils learn
- The development of subjects and curriculum design
- Effective classroom practice

- Adaptive teaching
- Assessment
- Professional development
- Principles of implementation

At the start of the programme, the trust was eligible to access scholarship funding which meant the places were funded by UK central government funds.

What the trust are doing

In late 2023, Carla and her team approached the Alliance of Leading Learning and LLSE to explore the potential of offering the NPQLT programme to all classroom-based staff in the eight schools. The Alliance of Leading Learning is the professional learning arm of The Marches Academy Trust, a growing Multi Academy Trust based in Shropshire, and one of the Delivery Partners working with LLSE on the NPQ programme. The Alliance of Leading Learning deliver their NPQ programmes in Shropshire via the Shropshire and Telford Education Partnership (STEP). Since 2021 STEP has worked with 180 local schools and trained 274 new teachers, 597 leaders on the National Professional Qualifications. The Empower MAT is one of the four key partners in STEP. LLSE is a Lead Provider for the NPQ programmes and is currently judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted, largely as a consequence of the support and participant centred approach it takes to the delivery of programmes.

Alliance of Leading Learning Executive Director, Cavelle Priestley-Bird and Professional Learning Business Manager, Gemma Hargreaves are working closely with Carla and her Director of Education, Sam Scott to tailor the delivery of the NPQ. Their expertise is a core part of bringing the programme to life, supporting the MAT in overcoming logistical challenges and maintaining fidelity to the robust learning aims of the NPQ. Co-ordinating the calendars of eight schools, as well as the NPQ schedules is a challenge which continuously brings out the creativity in everyone involved. LLSE are supporting both the MAT and the Alliance of Leading Learning in their endeavours to deliver the programme and working with the Department for Education to secure programme adjustments which facilitate this approach.

A vital element of making the initiative a success is ensuring that it takes place within time which has already been allocated to professional development. This includes INSET days, staff meetings, planned twilights and other occasions which have already been allocated for training. A plan has been shared with staff, so that they are aware that the programme will be undertaken in time already allocated to training. This is helping to allay fears of increases in workload.

The programme involves all teachers, and importantly, any class-based support staff practitioners who wish to participate. Leaders at all levels participate in the training to ensure that it is a truly collaborative exercise. An essential element of this was working with the Alliance of Leading Learning and LLSE to enable classroom-based support staff practitioners to access the training.

The trust is offering opportunities for staff to visit each other's schools as part of the programme. The trust is divided into two hubs, one based around the Shrewsbury area and another around the Market Drayton area, as these are geographically practical distances to travel to sessions. Within these areas, the location of in person facilitation is being rotated to allow the staff to see each other's settings.

All LLSE NPQ's incorporate coaching to allow reflection on the learning which is taking place. The Empower MAT have taken the decision to focus on group coaching, as this provides an opportunity for greater collaboration in individual schools. Group coaching is run on an individual school basis, allowing colleagues in each school to come together to share their learning. This provides an opportunity for schools to think about their own contexts and reflect on how the learning they are undertaking applies to specifically their own school's teaching.

The facilitation team comprises a combination of headteachers, trust senior leaders and staff who have completed the NPQLT training. This diverse team allows the programme to be delivered by both senior leaders and experienced staff members, providing two different perspectives that enrich the learning experience.
The programme has been running since February 2024 and will run until the end of January 2025.

How is it going so far?

An increase in collaboration

Integration of collaboration into teacher professional development has been shown to have positive impacts on pupil learning, teacher expertise and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Hattie, 2015; Mostafa and Pál, 2018; Xie et al., 2023). It is clear from conversations with both the trust central team and those working at school level that there has been a tangible impact on positive collaboration across the trust. Staff speak about the transition from formal training together into more informal networking and sharing of best practice. Classroom based support staff practitioners are increasingly being seen as co-creators of the pupils' learning experience and are playing a bigger role in the planning and

leadership of learning.

The venues in which face-to-face sessions occur is rotating between the schools in the trust to encourage staff to get to know each other's schools. The opportunity to visit other schools is proving to be a very popular move and staff talk about it leading to lots of inspiration around the best practices which can be shared. One participant shares that, "It is good to see that what you implement in the classroom is similar in other classrooms within the MAT." Some subject leaders are now working together to enhance the learning experiences across the MAT in their subject specialisms. In the words of one participant, "I am glad that we are all in this together as it is very supportive."

An increase in collegiality

The term collegiality refers to the quality of relationships among staff (Kelchtermans, 2006), and is distinct from collaboration which refers to the degree to which colleagues take cooperative action together. There is promising international evidence that suggests that increases in collegiality fosters teacher professional development, job satisfaction, professional commitment and leads to improvements in student performance (Retallick and Butt, 2004; Barth, 2006; Shah, 2012; Irene, Chepkonga and Gori, 2020). For MAT CEO Carla Whelan, as well as to the trust staff at all levels, the programme is bringing about a much stronger sense of collegiality between the schools within the trust.

Staff involved say that they are excited about the fact they have been able to visit other schools and talk about informal networking being a positive part of the programme experience. One participant says that, "I am finding completing the course as part of the MAT and school community is really helping as it provides a real community of support and discussion." Some staff express a new confidence in being able to reach out to their colleagues to ask for advice and support when needed. For example, one participant is finding that, "Discussion enables you to be sure you are on the right track and increases personal confidence." Rather than being directed into creating communities of practice, these have emerged organically as staff has begun to get to know each other. Staff noticeably refer to themselves as a community within the MAT, rather than as individual schools. A participant is keen to observe that, "We all work very well to help each other achieve and improve as professionals."

Stronger pedagogy and shared understanding of excellent teaching

Staff speak about the confidence the initiative has given them to have deeper conversations about teaching. The shared understanding and shared language around teaching they have gained through the NPQLT have been key to enabling this

to happen. One participant is noticing that, "The course is keeping me up to date on the latest research and helping me to reflect on how this helps me in my role." Another participant notes that, "I feel like I have learnt a lot about Rosenshine's principles, and I have managed to incorporate these into my daily teaching." According to Hattie (Hattie, 2003, p. 5), "Experts possess knowledge that is more integrated, in that they combine new subject matter content knowledge with prior knowledge; can relate current lesson content to other subjects in the curriculum; and make lessons uniquely their own by changing, combining, and adding to them according to their students' needs and their own goals." Staff report feeling more able to confidently talk about their students' learning, what is working in their classroom and feel more empowered to try new things. One participant is finding, "It has been clear how the course links to the FAME framework that the school and trust are using to structure lessons." Another participant observes that, "As all my colleagues are also doing the NPQLT course, they will be developing a good understanding of how pupils learn at the same time as me." The focus on adaptive teaching in the NPQLT has been widely adopted and staff describe how they are now starting to feel confident to critically evaluate past approaches to teaching, and where appropriate abandon them in favour of things which are more effective. Or as one participant puts it, "We all contribute to a community of high expectation."

The ability to apply learning

One of the barriers to professional development in schools impacting on pupil outcomes is the challenges which can be faced by teachers in having opportunities to implement what they have learnt (Yoon et al., 2007). Because the entire staff body are undertaking training together there are less barriers to applying the learning. A participant points out that, "It is helpful to think of practical ways you can implement things in your own school and classroom." Moreover, support from colleagues and senior leaders is present as a culture of trying new approaches is being created. As a consequence, teachers talk of significant implementation of what has been learnt so far at a classroom level. The experience appears to support the view (Hayes, Preminger and Bae, 2024) that learning experiences for teachers are enhanced when those teachers can observe the difference in student learning achieved using different methodologies.

Staff surveys indicate that staff feel a greater sense of ownership during lesson observations as a result of the measures taken by the trust to focus on teaching. Surveys also indicate that staff believe that they are clear on the common expectations of them in terms of teaching standards throughout the MAT.

Greater whole school discussion about teaching approaches

Senior Leaders and staff at all levels state that group coaching sessions at school level are supporting goal setting which is context specific, a factor which behavioural change research (Michie et al., 2013) suggests is more likely to encourage adoption of new learning into regular practice. Leaders believe this is leading to much faster positive change than a top-down approach likely would have. A number of staff report greater comfort in having informal discussion with their colleagues about approaches to teaching they are trialling. This is captured in the feedback of one participant who reports really valuing the opportunity of, "Being able to discuss strategies, compare ideas and have professional conversations."

Impact across career stages

Designing professional development for teachers which is relevant across all career stages and prior experiences is at best challenging (Fairman et al., 2020). Much has been made within the English education about creating a golden thread of teacher professional development which supports development at all career stages (Department for Education, 2022). The implications of the structure of the NPQ perhaps suggest that they lend themselves more towards teachers with a certain level of experience. In this case, the evidence suggests that NPQs may also have wider relevance, including to teachers at the beginning of their careers, as well as those who are not qualified teachers but still play a role in leadership of teaching in the classroom.

Staff at all career stages reported feeling that the NPQLT had been beneficial to their professional development, including those who had recently completed their Early Career training. A common focus appears to be around evidence-based teaching practice. Staff who had recently completed their early career training talked about how they were able to share recent research acquired through their Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework experiences. Conversely more experienced staff felt the NPQLT had given them a chance to reflect on their practice and to access recent research which they may not otherwise have had access to. One participant is picking up, "A greater understanding about cognitive science and how children learn [which] is enabling me to see how I can begin to implement change in my practice."

Impact for all classroom practitioners

Evidence suggests that the impact of teaching assistants can be highly variable (Muijs and Reynolds, 2003; Bent, Knapp and Robinson, 2020; Hodgen, Adkins and Ainsworth, 2023; Department for Education, 2024). There is compelling evidence that when deployed

effectively support staff practitioners can have significant positive influence on pupil's learning (Bosanquet, Radford and Webster, 2016). Professional development for support staff often significantly lags behind that for teaching staff in schools (Clay, 2017) and including support staff practitioners in professional development activities can have a range of positive outcomes for them, their colleagues and pupils (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2021; Antinluoma, Ilomäki and Toom, 2022).

Both support staff practitioners and their teaching counterparts state that the decision to include support staff class-based practitioners alongside those with a teaching background has improved the understanding of leadership of teaching. Teaching assistants talk enthusiastically about how they are focusing the programme on their leadership of phonics. The support staff value the inclusivity of the programme, the confidence they are gaining as a result, and the opportunity it is giving them to be involved in leading learning. One participant is now finding that, "...I have been asked to attend the teacher staff meetings which is a huge step in being able to develop my leadership skills and having the same information as the teachers enables me to disseminate information to the LSA's where appropriate." Teaching staff feel that teaching assistants are now more integrated into the teaching and are no longer separate.

Greater collaboration in decision making

A recent evidence review by the Education Endowment Foundation listed relational trust as a key component in retaining teachers within the workforce. Relational trust requires considering the individual needs of teachers, treating teachers with respect and listening to teacher voice (Shuls and Flores, 2020; Cann, Riedel-Prabhakar and Powell, 2021; Frahm and Cianca, 2021). The ability to involve teachers in policy development and decisions on teaching practice seems to be desirable in achieving these outcomes. Data from the OECD suggests that teachers in England may have less opportunities to actively participate in school decisions than on other OECD countries (Micklewright et al., 2014). However, the challenge for school leaders may be that staff need a level of shared competence in order to engage meaningfully in these dialogues. According to situational leadership theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993), the higher the level of competence the less directive and, arguably, more participative leadership can become.

As a consequence of staff becoming more competent and confident in the leadership of teaching, it has been possible to have a higher level of conversation about how teaching should be approached within the MAT. Carla estimates the effect of the NPQ being a boost of around 18 months progress when compared to the time it would have taken to reach the same level of competency through standard professional development. As a consequence, she now feels able to bring forward discussions around the teaching

policy and to create that policy collaboratively.

Staff report that they value having the opportunity to discuss changes to learning approaches as a whole staff body within their schools, as one participant puts it, "Working together and sharing ideas is extremely important." A number of the schools have begun to think about how they may adapt their teaching and learning policies as a consequence of conversations with their staff bodies which have occurred as an outcome of the NPQLT.

Similarly, Headteachers talk about the co-creation of school Improvement plans with staff and building in aspects of the NPQ to the plans. This has resulted in greater buy-in from staff. Because Headteachers are participating in the training alongside their colleagues, there is a sense of 'doing it together'. This is consistent with research indicating that when leaders learn alongside their colleagues it enhances the effectiveness of the learning experience and contributes to a positive learning culture (Hilton et al., 2015).

The above is supportive of the conclusions drawn by Ofsted (2024b) that the most effective schools use the NPQs to inform whole school improvement.

A drive towards more consistency and divergence in practice

Research suggests that increasing teacher autonomy, particularly in tailoring the curriculum and teaching style to meet pupil needs may have promise for improving the quality of educational activities (Ertürk, 2023), increasing student engagement (Navaneethakrishnan, 2020), and achievement (Pramanik, 2023), as well as positively impacting teacher job satisfaction (Dilekçi, 2022), and staff retention (Audrain et al., 2023). However, autonomy may need to be balanced with consistency of strategies and pedagogical approaches to be effective (Ruddle, 2019).

Somewhat paradoxically, staff talk about greater consistency, while at the same time expressing their confidence to tailor their teaching to the specific needs of their year group, school or specific class. Digging a little deeper, it is clear that staff are consistently bringing the latest research to bear on their practice and to explore what works for pupils, even if that means abandoning the safety of a one-size-fits-all approach. It appears the NPQLT has provided a framework for effectively and consistently evaluating the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches. One staff member believes that, "The coaching sessions are valuable opportunities to unpick the learning from the modules and link it to our own practice in school." As a result, the trust report that more diverse teaching can be found across the MAT, but all of it is underpinned by good principles which are shared across the staff body.

A creative and responsive working partnership

The partnership with the Alliance of Leading Learning and LLSE is proving instrumental in maximising the flexibility of the NPQLT. Carla talks about the support she received in realising her vision from the two organisations. The Alliance of Leading Learning's familiarity with the NPQ programme and the content meant that they could offer advice on the sequencing of the learning in a way which aligned with the MATs calendar. Staff feel that "The expectations and support available were very clear at the start of the course.", and that, "Facilitators are knowledgeable and helpful when completing the NPQ."

Supported by LLSE, who trained the facilitators and negotiated flexibilities to the programme with the Department for Education, the Alliance of Leading Learning developed a programme which met the trust's needs. One of the key reasons for working with LLSE and the Alliance of Leading Learning is that they have negotiated with the Department for Education a programme which is accessible to support staff practitioners. After understanding the Empower MAT's desire to include all classroom-based staff, the Alliance of Leading Learning worked with LLSE to ensure that support staff practitioners were able to participate in the programme. Staff and MAT leaders alike feedback that the advantages of all staff learning together are emerging as a force multiplier.

The Alliance of Leading Learning and LLSE are currently exploring ways this model can be used in other settings. Cavelle and Gemma talk passionately about how this model provides a potential blueprint to bring subject specialists and other groups of staff together within MATs and collaborations. It is clear for them that this is an experimental approach, but one which has been made possible by their creative and flexible way of working. An additional development at LLSE has been the creation of a NPQLT focused and tailored to support staff practitioners. The project's success has only been possible because of the mutual trust and collaboration which has been developed between the Delivery Partner, Lead Provider and the MAT.

A positive impact on staff wellbeing

Staff talk about the efficiency of the programme, the effectiveness of time management which had been achieved, the time saved in adopting best practices rather than individually creating solutions, and the regularity of training as an important ingredient of remaining on track with assignment work. Staff feel that doing it together has reduced the pressure on individuals to be the driving force behind effective teaching but shared that responsibility with everyone.

A key ingredient here is the effort which is evident to utilise existing professional development time on INSET days, staff meetings and within other directed time. The trust is also intentional about ensuring that by doing this, other activities which may have taken place during that time are managed in a way which does not increase workload. Establishing good alternative channels of communication rather than relying on face-to-face staff meetings to convey information has been well considered.

The staff indicate that they appreciate the way the trust is managing the cognitive load by spreading out the training and providing regular opportunities to engage. One participant sums this up when they say, "The programme is well planned out." Staff talked about how this supported them in not falling behind in their learning. Other organisations planning for similar programmes, should carefully consider how to manage the workload and break it down into manageable and regular chunks.

The logistical challenges of managing the timetable across multiple schools are not to be underestimated, and a lot of work was put into aligning dates and structuring the programme to get the balance between individual school needs and the hard deadlines of the NPQ programme. This has involved close partnership work with the Alliance of Leading Learning who were the Delivery Partner for the programme.

The trust have also managed some challenges around the workload. At the end of the first module a number of participants were struggling to manage the amount of reading involved. Having reviewed the feedback that, "I did not realise each learning experience (containing many activities to take part in) would take so many hours to complete.", the trust spent time going through with staff which parts of the reading were essential, and which were not. The trust also worked with support staff professionals to tailor some of the materials to make them more easily accessible. At this point, the feedback indicates staff are finding the workload more manageable.

An improvement in pupil outcomes

Research indicates that high quality professional development can have a significant positive impact on pupil outcomes (Fletcher-Wood and Zuccollo, 2020). The investment in time and energy which the trust has put into improving teaching means that outcomes are now projected to be above national averages. Indeed, more broadly, in terms of trust improvement. In 2023, trust evaluations showed they were good or outstanding in five out of their eight of their strategic measures of success. In one year, that number has risen to seven. Anecdotal evidence from teacher feedback also indicates that pupil engagement has increased as a consequence of tailoring of both teaching style and content to meet the pupils' needs. While it is too early to look at end of Key Stage results,

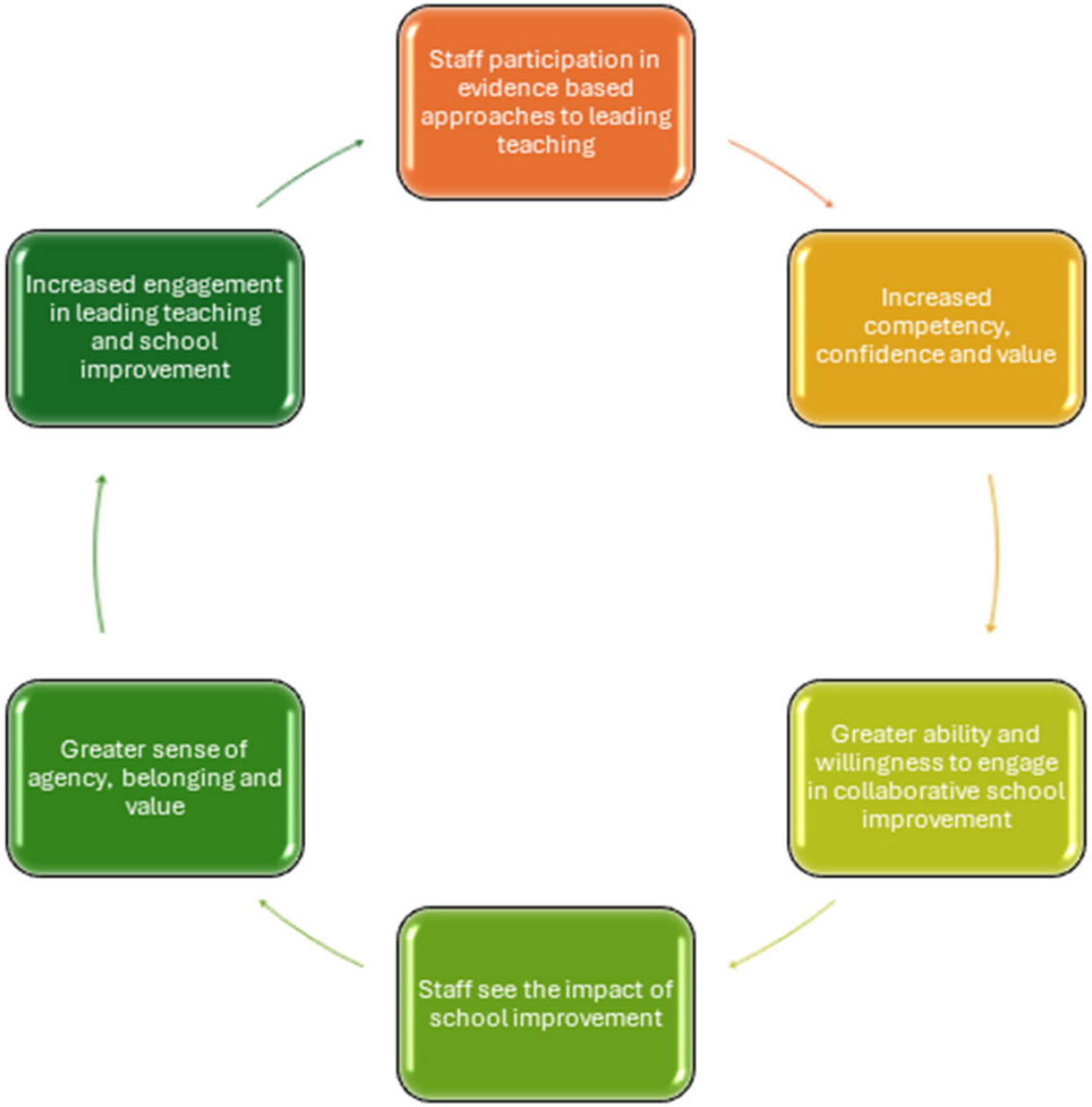

Figure 1 - The virtuous circle of whole school staff development

indications are this will see improvement as a consequence of the programme.

Creating a virtuous circle

Offering all class-based staff the NPQLT programme is having a number of aspirational outcomes:

- Generating a trust-wide culture of excellence in the leadership of teaching
- Creating a shared language for learning across all class-based trust staff
- Strengthening the existing relationships between schools and staff within the trust
- Supporting the long-term retention of staff by investing in their Professional Development
- Empowering staff to be effective leaders of teaching
- Upskilling support staff practitioners in becoming leaders of learning
- Creating opportunities for a more collaborative approach to policy development and school improvement planning

The outcome of this approach appears to be creating a virtuous circle (see fig 1.) where positive increases in competency, confidence and agency improve engagement and outcomes, which in turn improves competency, confidence and agency. Given that school improvement is not a singular activity, but a continuous one, this model appears to be one which is sustainable.

It is too early to see the impact of this on staff retention, but engagement is certainly a contributing factor to retention (Ngozi and Edwinah, 2022). Moreover, there is international evidence that high quality professional development and increasing teacher autonomy have a positive impact on reducing teacher attrition (García and Weiss, 2019; García, Han and Weiss, 2021). Certainly, anecdotal evidence from participant feedback at this

point shows promise in terms of some of the antecedents of a reduction in staff attrition being present.

Lessons for others considering a similar approach

1. Leaders should be clear in signalling the importance of professional development around the leadership of teaching from the outset.

2. School and Trust leaders considering a similar approach can take some comfort in the knowledge that the programme being mandatory has not generally been a negative factor for staff. However, this appears to have been mediated by the sense staff have that they are empowered to implement changes in context and the careful consideration given to managing workload.

3. School and trust leaders should be positive, but not naïve. A key learning point for the MAT has been in terms of balancing the communications around the 'Why' the programme is being used and the 'How' it will be run in terms of practical arrangements. A key action which has helped to quickly bring about buy-in has been to produce a timetable setting out how the programme would be integrated into directed time.

4. Focus should be given to getting the structures and timings right. School and trust leaders should not underestimate the logistical work involved in a whole school / trust programme. There were several features of the programme timings which maximised its effectiveness:

- It was planned to take place predominantly during existing training and staff meeting time, meaning it was not 'additional' time for staff

- Equity for staff was considered and support staff practitioners were able to claim additional hours where they were required to attend during times they would normally not have been working
- The programme was sequenced in a way which meant workload was distributed proportionately over time, but also to avoid key busy periods
- Sessions were planned in two hubs reducing travel time and distances for staff
- Clarity was provided around which were optional reading materials to reduce workload

5. In giving over professional development time and staff meetings to NPQ activities, school and trust leaders need to consider how other training / administration activities will be undertaken.

6. In facilitating a programme of this magnitude, consideration should also be given to the impact on staff wellbeing and workload. Efforts to clarify mandatory reading and to scaffold learning materials can be supportive to this process.

7. The choice of delivery partner who is aligned with the school or trust values and willing to be flexible in their delivery approach is paramount. Crucial to the success of this programme has been the support, creativity and flexibility that the Alliance of Leading Learning has been able to offer as the Delivery Partner.

8. School and trust leaders should plan to involve everyone involved in the delivery of learning. Including support staff practitioners has amplified the effect of the programme. However, this may require tailoring some of the NPQ materials to ensure they are accessible to all participants.

9. School and trust leaders should focus on maximising collaboration. There are several features of the implementation of the programme which has enhanced the opportunities for collaboration:

- Involving the MAT leadership team in the running of the programme
- Ensuring Headteachers participated in the training alongside staff
- Involving everyone in the classroom (including support staff practitioners)
- Visiting other schools
- Holding training sessions together
- Running group coaching sessions in each school
- Creating space and time for informal networking to occur

The clear benefit of having fully funded NPQ places

One of the major enablers for this programme is the ability of the trust to access the NPQLT programme free of charge. This enables all schools in the MAT to be able to access the training, regardless of their demographics. A clear advantage of this is it embedded a culture of excellence in all eight schools and a consistency of approach across the whole trust.

In terms of policy, there may be merit in considering funding approaches which allow MATs, rather than individual schools, to access funding for school improvement related activities utilising the NPQs as a vehicle for rapid change.

Conclusion

At the mid-point of the programme, there is promising evidence that the programme is having positive impact on teaching, collaboration and staff engagement. The trust indicate that a number of school improvement priorities have been achieved as a consequence of the programme. While there have been challenges (notably logistical ones) to overcome, the staff and the trust leaders report that the positives outweigh the challenges. While it is too early to review pupil outcomes, predictions are that they will have moved from slightly below national averages to above national averages.
Overall, the emerging picture is positive, and the model created here represents a potential approach which could be adopted by other school and trust leaders.

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