

[Click for updates](#)

Professional Development in Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjie20>

Judging the quality of school leadership learning programmes: an international search

Bev Fluckiger^a, Susan Lovett^b & Neil Dempster^a

^a Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD 4122, Australia

^b School of Educational Studies and Leadership, Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand

Published online: 22 Apr 2014.

To cite this article: Bev Fluckiger, Susan Lovett & Neil Dempster (2014) Judging the quality of school leadership learning programmes: an international search, Professional Development in Education, 40:4, 561-575, DOI: [10.1080/19415257.2014.902861](https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.902861)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.902861>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Judging the quality of school leadership learning programmes: an international search

Bev Fluckiger^{a*}, Susan Lovett^b and Neil Dempster^a

^a*Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD 4122, Australia;* ^b*School of Educational Studies and Leadership, Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand*

(Received 12 November 2013; accepted 2 March 2014)

How to best address the professional learning needs of those aspiring to leadership roles in schools is a crucial issue. Robust evaluation practices are needed to determine the quality of current provisions and to identify where improvements can be made. This paper considers the quality of professional learning programmes using a set of 10 criteria distilled from a synthesis of compelling international leadership learning research. We show the potential of the 10 criteria for judging the quality of professional learning programmes by applying them to examples of programmes drawn from five countries around the world. These examples provide a launching pad from which questions can be posed about the potential use and applicability of such criteria in making design decisions about the quality and value of professional learning programmes in a range of national and international contexts.

Keywords: professional learning programmes; aspiring school leaders; programme design and quality; judgement criteria

Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to make a contribution to understanding the elements of high-quality professional learning programmes appropriate for the preparation of those readying themselves for future leadership roles. The paper is structured in four parts. First, we argue the need for a set of robust practices to evaluate the quality of the current provision of professional learning programmes for aspiring leaders. Second, we describe our evaluation of one professional learning programme and our use of a set of 10 criteria drawn from international research that we considered helpful in making judgements about programme quality. Third, we present these criteria and, using examples drawn from local and international programmes, illustrate their potential for judging the quality of professional learning programmes. Fourth, we consider the potential use and applicability of these criteria as a research-validated framework for making design decisions and determining the quality and value of professional learning programmes in a range of contexts. The paper concludes with some comments on key components of programme design to enhance the leadership learning of aspirants.

*Corresponding author. Email: b.fluckiger@griffith.edu.au

Leadership preparation

In recent times, school leadership preparation has been recognised internationally as an important issue (Cowie and Crawford 2007, Bush 2009, McKinsey and Company 2010). It is argued to be a critical aspect of school development (Cowie and Crawford 2007), a strong influence on the learning of students (McKinsey and Company 2010) and pivotal in ensuring leadership supply and progression (Fink 2011).

Despite its acknowledged importance, current school leadership preparation is seen by many as inadequate (Hallinger 2003, Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2007, Brundrett and Crawford 2008), leaving aspirant and novice leaders ill-prepared to take up roles in contemporary schools that are increasing in complexity. In its report on improving school leadership, the OECD (2008) concluded that we are preparing school leaders for a role that was designed for the industrial age, a role that has not changed enough to deal with the complex challenges in the twenty-first century. These complex challenges include managing change, building organisational capacity, implementing technological advances, increasing effectiveness and striving to improve the learning outcomes of students. Consequently, leaders may be required to assume the roles of education visionary, change agent, pedagogical leader, budget analyst, facility manager and community organiser in their schools.

It is therefore no surprise that McKinsey and Company in their report, which analysed eight high-performing school systems internationally, found ‘the improvement of leadership capacity as a top priority and an area where more has to be done’ (2010, p. 5). Others rightly argue that the increasing complexity of school contexts and the growing list of responsibilities placed on school leaders, due in part to increasingly diverse contexts and the move to site-based management and increased autonomy, mean that employers have a moral obligation to provide them with appropriate preparation and development for their roles (Leithwood *et al.* 2006, Bush 2009).

The reported inadequacy of school leadership preparation suggests there is a need to evaluate current practices. In such an evaluation, Darling-Hammond *et al.* found many programmes in the USA, ‘inadequate to the challenges of managing schools in a diverse society in which expectations for learning are increasingly ambitious’ (2007, p. 5).

Evaluation of the Emerging Principals Professional Development Program

We recently conducted an external evaluation of an Australian school leadership preparation programme: the Emerging Principals Professional Development Program (Dempster *et al.* 2012). This programme, run by the Queensland Education Leadership Institute (QELi), sets out to engage aspirant leaders considering the next step towards school principalship. Whilst research based, the programme is practical, consisting of a range of activities including online tutorials, workshops, field visits, experiential and problem-based activities, and an action research project that is supported by online collegial tutorials and an online learning coach.

In asking us to undertake an external evaluation, the QELi was responding to the clear criticism accompanying most leadership development programmes; in particular, the enthusiasm for immediate measures of the quality of a programme as described in feedback provided by participants, rather than attention to identifying the impact of such programmes over time or their long-term benefits (Bush 2009). Consequently, the evaluation examined both the quality of the programme as well as its impact over time.

The evaluation process consisted of an online instrument (questionnaire) that was closely linked to the structure of the programme and its learning components as they were experienced by participants. The instrument was cold piloted and administered six months after completion of the programme, via an online website. It sought the views of participants, their supervisors (usually their principals), teachers and others with whom participants had been engaged in a leadership challenge (an action research project). The views of supervisors and teachers were sought to enable the triangulation of data so that several perspectives could be brought to bear on the validity of the findings.

Overall, the leadership programme participants, the teachers with whom they worked and their principals presented a positive picture of the programme and its effects in preparing leaders contemplating stepping up to a school's formal senior leadership position. This view was expressed some six months after the completion of the programme, allowing ample time for the erosion of the programme's effects to be felt. We suggest that its success may be attributed to the experiential and problem-based nature of the activities that were central to the programme. Huber (2011) illustrates the importance of this (see Figure 1) and explains that no matter what mode of learning is engaged, each must be drawn into a reciprocal relationship with practice to be effective.

Despite the positive view expressed, our evaluation identified a need for further opportunity in the programme to: create innovative approaches to improve student learning outcomes; assist in the development of personal goals for future leadership development; ensure ongoing mentoring relationships; and facilitate a network of aspiring colleagues. There was also evidence of a clear need for the programme to better provide opportunities for participants to acquire the knowledge and skills associated with evidence-based decision-making.

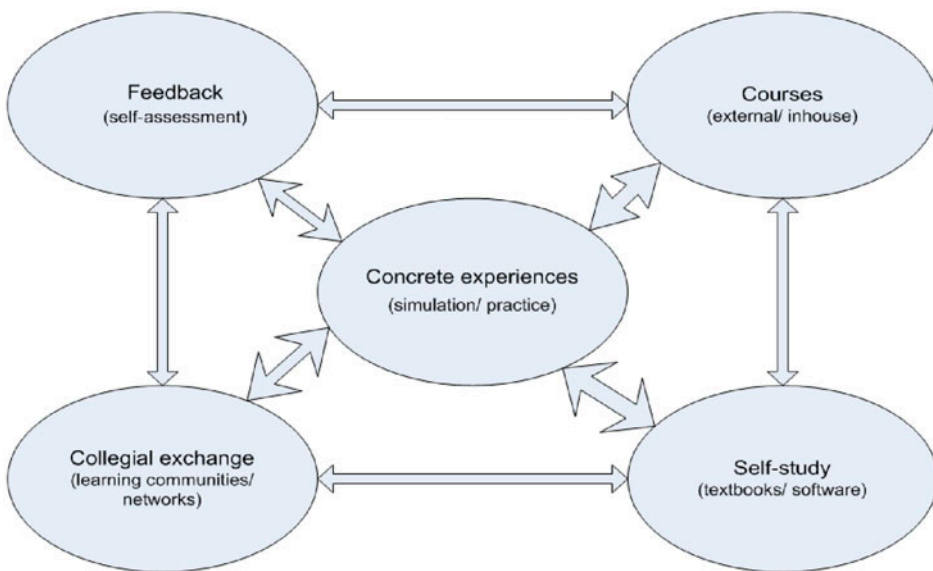


Figure 1. Approaches to learning in professional development.

Table 1. A framework of research-derived criteria for judging the quality of leadership professional learning.

High-quality leadership learning programmes should be:

- (1) Philosophically and theoretically attuned to individual and system needs in leadership and professional learning
 - (2) Goal oriented, with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement
 - (3) Informed by the weight of research evidence
 - (4) Time rich, allowing for learning sequences to be spaced and interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters
 - (5) Practice centred, so that knowledge is taken back into the school in ways that maximise the effects of leadership capability
 - (6) Purpose designed for specific career stages, with ready transfer of theory and knowledge into practice
 - (7) Peer supported within or beyond the school, so that feedback helps to transfer theory and knowledge into improved practice
 - (8) Context sensitive, and thus able to build in and make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances
 - (9) Partnership powered, with external support through joint ventures involving associations, universities and the wider professional world
 - (10) Committed to evaluating the effects on leaders, as well as on school practices to which their learning applies
-

Whilst these findings are useful for the QELi to further refine the content and delivery of the programme, we went a step further to make some judgements about its overall design. To do so we drew on earlier work, a synthesis of select research literature (Dempster *et al.* 2011), in which we distilled a set of 10 criteria that we consider useful when making judgements about the overall quality of professional learning programmes (see Table 1). In applying these criteria we determined that the programme met at least six of them because it was: time rich, practice centred, purpose designed, peer supported, context centred and effects oriented. In the planning of future programmes, our view was that further consideration needed to be given to making explicit the philosophical basis for leadership learning; for example, bringing to the surface informing assumptions about epistemology, ontology and human nature, as well as research findings related to the connections between leadership and student learning and, similarly, research findings related to the particular focuses of the participants' action research projects.

By applying the set of 10 criteria to the Emerging Principals Professional Development Program, we believe we have made a start in providing a research-validated framework for use in judging the design and quality of professional learning programmes. In the following section we present each criterion and use programmes drawn from five countries to illustrate the use of the framework in making judgements about quality more broadly.

Applying the programme design criteria more broadly

In this section we apply the 10 criteria to eight professional learning programmes sourced from five countries in our attempt to demonstrate their potential for judging

Table 2. Leadership programmes used as illustrative examples.

Name of programme	Origin	Features
1. Emerging Principals Professional Development Program	Queensland, Australia: Queensland Educational Leadership Institute (QELi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to support high-performing leaders in middle-management in schools who aspire to the position of principal • Takes 12 months to complete • Delivered through a blended learning approach
2. L5 Leadership	South Australia: Principals Australia Institute (PAI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at current and aspiring leaders including principals, executives and middle management • Offers online self-paced modules with flexible timing for completion • Is not a requirement or qualification for new principals
3. National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)	England: National College for Teaching and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for aspiring principals • Takes six to 18 months to complete • Prepares participants for the role of head teacher • Has gateway assessment for entry • Further assessment on completion of the programme
4. Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH)	Scotland: The General Teaching Council for Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered by various university providers as part of postgraduate leadership programmes • Designed to ensure competence in all aspects of the Standard for Headship • Takes 26 months to complete
5. Flexible Route to Headship	Scotland: The General Teaching Council for Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned with the Standard for Headship • Designed to bring forward high-quality teachers in Scotland and develop their leadership potential • Predominately practice based • Responds to a need for flexibility in head teacher professional preparation

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Name of programme	Origin	Features
6. Principal Qualification Program (PQP)	Ontario, Canada: Ontario Principals' Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered by Ontario universities, teachers' federations and principals' associations • Designed to provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective school administrators • Successful completion of the programme represents a qualification as well as professional learning
7. National Aspiring Principals Program	New Zealand: Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to prepare aspirants for principalship in any New Zealand school • Culturally responsive • Uses an inquiry learning approach to build understanding of leadership research
8. First Time Principals	New Zealand: Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An induction programme for first-time principals • Designed to meet the needs of participating principals across New Zealand from all types of schools • Takes 18 months to complete

the quality of professional learning programmes and informing programme review and design (see Table 2 for the leadership programmes and countries used as illustrative examples). First, however, we acknowledge the limitations of this exercise. In applying the criteria, we have drawn on information about each programme that is publicly available through a desktop search only. We have not been privy to details of each programme beyond that. Therefore, the judgements we have made are useful for this illustrative exercise only and should not be seen as judgements of the value of the programmes overall.

We now use each of the 10 criteria in turn in a discussion of the programmes outlined above.

Criterion 1: attuned to individual and system needs

The literature suggests (Dempster 2001, Hopkins 2008) that programmes for aspiring or emerging leaders need to be philosophically and theoretically attuned to both system and individual needs in leadership and professional learning. Dempster (2001) argues the importance of programmes being attuned to system needs to ensure that new and potential leaders have the knowledge, skills, values and

attitudes required to carry out their leadership functions and pursue efficiency and effectiveness whilst they implement both government priorities and values and system plans and objectives. At the same time, Dempster argues the importance of programmes meeting the personal and collective professional needs that arise from practical, moral and ethical concerns in daily leadership and management of learning both within specific schools and beyond them. These challenges may include finding ways to respond to problem situations for which solutions lie outside current ways of operating. Hopkins (2008) refers to these as adaptive challenges of system change. Therefore, the philosophical bases for leadership learning – that is, the informing assumptions about epistemology, ontology and human nature – as well as research findings related to the connections between leadership and student learning need to be made explicit. Furthermore, we believe there needs to be a balance between what systems deem appropriate and what individuals may deem necessary as they take responsibility to deepen their leadership knowledge and to enhance their practice.

It would appear from our desktop examination that programmes from Scotland, Ontario and New Zealand were, to some extent, attuned to both individual and system needs. For example, the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) emphasised system needs in the standards and qualifications required by those wishing to become head teachers, and considered individual needs in its acknowledgement of prior learning and the participants' workplace contexts throughout its courses. Other programmes seemed to place a stronger emphasis on the needs of the system than the individual. In our opinion, these programmes did not provide sufficient information on the opportunities for individuals to take agency in decision-making related to what might be necessary to deepen their leadership knowledge and practice. Philosophically, this tends to privilege the system over the individual. We suggest that the philosophical underpinnings that inform the design of all the illustrated programmes, as well as assumptions about knowledge and what is considered important about how it is acquired, need to be better explained.

Criterion 2: goal oriented

We gleaned from the literature (Robinson *et al.* 2009, Day *et al.* 2010, Bishop 2011, Hallinger 2011) that professional learning programmes need to be goal oriented, with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement. Robinson *et al.* (2009, p. 171) explain that it is a combination of practical insight (what works) and underpinning (why it works) that changes professional practice in ways that make a difference for students. Programmes should therefore ensure that leaders acquire a repertoire of strategies to pursue the goals that include in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning as well as knowledge across the range of dimensions identified as making a difference. Robinson *et al.* (2009) identified these dimensions as: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; ensuring an orderly and supportive environment; creating educationally powerful connections; engaging in constructive problem talk; and selecting, developing and using smart tools.

The programmes from New Zealand, Ontario and England that we examined, along with the SQH, were goal oriented, with school improvement as well as

improvement in student learning as strong foci. For example, the processes for school improvement are clearly outlined in the Principal Qualification Program (PQP) offered in Ontario, and this also makes clear that the principal is specifically accountable for the goals set out in the school improvement plan. Student learning is also a focus in the programme and it claims to assist leaders to align, develop and monitor programmes, structures, processes, resource and staff to support student achievement and demonstrate accountability for the achievement of all students and promote student success and lifelong learning in partnership with staff, parents and community. The extent to which the Scottish Flexible Route to Headship programme and the L5 Leadership programme offered by the Principals' Australia Institute (PAI) in South Australia gave an emphasis to school improvement and student learning and achievement, however, was unable to be determined from available documents.

Criterion 3: research informed

There is consensus in the literature (Waters *et al.* 2003, Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2007) that professional learning programmes should be informed by the weight of research evidence on substantive school and pedagogical matters. The thinking is that school leaders are less likely to disregard knowledge and theory that are research informed and are more likely to apply these in practice, thus transferring knowledge into action (Huber 2011). Currently, research evidence suggests that the role of pedagogical leadership, along with the associated relational aspects attributed to distributed and transformative leadership, is central to improving student outcomes (Robinson *et al.* 2009, Hallinger 2011) and should therefore be central to professional learning programmes for leaders.

The programmes from England, Scotland, Ontario and New Zealand that we examined provided strong evidence against this research criterion. For example, programmes in New Zealand appeared to base professional learning on a comprehensive synthesis of best practice research summarised in 'School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why' (Robinson 2007).

Being informed by research evidence was less evident in the information about programmes from Australia that we reviewed. However, reference is made to the use of research evidence in the first module of the L5 Leadership programme (PAI, Australia).

Criterion 4: time rich

The literature (Huber 2011) suggests that professional learning programmes for aspiring leaders need to be time rich, providing ample time for learning sequences to be spaced and interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters. We agree that this is important, but suggest also that capable educators should be encouraged to take their first steps towards leadership early on in their career, whether in formal or informal roles. If learning to lead learning is seen as a natural and essential part of all capacity-building and professional learning for educators, then collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters, essential for the transfer of knowledge to practice, must become features of the school's professional learning community. An appreciation of the time-rich criterion

thus need not be constrained by a programme, but viewed in terms of broader opportunity and experience.

That said, the length of time provided in programmes to prepare aspiring leaders for principalship appears to vary from six to 26 months in the programmes reviewed. In England, Scotland, New Zealand and Canada there is designated time for professional growth with demonstrated provision of opportunities for onsite learning and reflection, along with support from mentors. For example, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is six to 18 months long. Its programme features in-school placements combining a whole-school strategic leadership task, as well as an opportunity to work with experienced head teachers in a different context, and providing opportunity for collegial support. Another programme, the SQH, takes 26 months to complete. Whilst specific requirements for collegial support are not evident in this programme, the length of the programme, the work required in schools and the study of another organisation imply a need to interact with other colleagues. In-school application and reflection appear to be required throughout this programme.

The L5 Leadership programme (PAI, South Australia) provides self-paced modules that allow leaders to be flexible in their learning development. Opportunities for collegial support are provided through workshops, online mentoring and an online professional knowledge network.

There is no designated optimal length of time to ensure that programmes are time rich. Instead, we consider programmes that provide opportunities for sequences of learning, support from colleagues, the application of learning in familiar contexts and personal reflection as time rich.

Criterion 5: practice centred

We found in the literature a strong focus on the importance of leaders taking knowledge gained in professional learning programmes back into their schools in ways that maximise the effects of leadership capability (OECD 2008, Bush 2009, Huber 2011). This means that effective leadership development strategies should be employed in programmes to ensure the transfer of knowledge to practice. Huber (2011) sees this done by selecting from a range of generic strategies for ongoing professional learning. These strategies are categorised as cognitive-theoretical ways of learning (courses, lectures and self-study), collegial (cooperative group work) and communicative process-oriented procedures (projects) and reflexive methods (feedback and self-assessment as well as supervision).

There was evidence in the information on programmes from England, Scotland and Ontario that they were practice-centred and focused on maximising the effects of leadership capability. For example, the NPQH (England) involves specific work in the leader's home school (or identified school). Leaders engage in day-to-day leadership development and take on a strategically challenging project with support from the head teacher. In the programme, leaders are expected to integrate learning into their leadership practice and to negotiate and engage in specific school improvement priorities.

A practice-centred approach that was focused on maximising the effects of leadership capability was less explicit in the New Zealand programme information we reviewed and in the L5 Learning programme (PAI, South Australia). For example, in the First Time Principals programme, residential courses are combined with

online interaction, modules of content and mentoring to provide a framework within which principals can focus on their practice and apply their leadership capabilities. However, how this might be done was not made explicit.

Criterion 6: purpose designed

The literature is clear that professional learning programmes need to be purpose designed for the participants and their specific career stages (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2007, OECD 2008, McKinsey and Company 2010). Leadership professional learning is seen as much more than preparation for the initial stage of a school leader's career, although there appears to be a tendency for systems to focus on the provision of professional development in the early leadership years. It is seen as lifelong learning that embraces the training principals receive before they assume their leadership positions, as well as the continuing professional development they engage in throughout their career. Typically, however, the provision of professional learning opportunities for more experienced leaders becomes sporadic. In their report, 'Capturing the leadership premium: how the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future', McKinsey and Company (2010) recommend giving the best people experience in leadership before they are ready, because, they suggest, this tests and challenges them. They see this as a better strategy than, 'expecting [talents] to emerge or [be acquired] by sending them through training programs just before they assume leadership responsibility' (2010, p. 10).

All of the programmes examined, apart from the L5 Leadership programme (PAI, South Australia) – which declared it was for all leaders – were purpose designed for early leadership preparation and provided opportunity for the ready transfer of theory and knowledge into practice. These opportunities involved problem-solving activities related to participants' own contexts and school-based action research projects. Several of the programmes – for example, the SQH and the NPQH, as suggested by their names – are purpose designed to develop teachers to meet an established standard for headship.

Criterion 7: peer supported

The literature suggests (Swaffield 2004, MacBeath 2006, Robertson 2008) that leaders need to reach out and support colleagues in leadership roles as feedback from colleagues, within or beyond the school, is seen as helping to transfer theory and knowledge into improved practice. The support is not seen as providing answers but rather as using a repertoire of tools to help those being mentored to reach new understandings. MacBeath (2006) explains there are three main forms of external support for school leaders: mentoring, coaching and critical friendship that extend from intervention to facilitation. However, peer support may also take the form of online facilitation, peer learning networks and group forums.

Almost all of the programmes that we examined demonstrated ways to facilitate peer support. In the PQP (Ontario), opportunities for participants to gain peer support are evident in the requirement that a component of the programme be delivered face to face, thus facilitating interaction and feedback from peers. Within the Leadership Practicum component of the programme, participants select a mentor and work with the leadership team of a school, providing further opportunities for support and feedback within the school context.

Other programmes have made good use of available technology. For example, the L5 Leadership programme (PAI, South Australia) has provided online platforms for peer support. However, feedback strategies specifically designed to assist in knowledge and theory transfer are not evident in the information reviewed.

Criterion 8: context sensitive

Incorporating real-life school-based problem-solving activities within the context of individual participants' schools is seen in the literature (Hallinger 2011, Huber 2011) as a good way for professional learning programmes to build in and make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances. It is also seen as a way of ensuring that knowledge and theory connect with practice and action (Huber 2011). Aspiring leaders want their professional learning centred in practice so that it is relevant and meaningful. This applies whether learning involves simulating the kind of challenges an aspiring leader may face in the future, or real on-the-job challenges that existing leaders encounter. The challenge is to provide professional learning experiences that link theoretical learning with the reality known by participants.

We found that the NPQH (England), SQH (Scotland) and PQP (Ontario) provided good examples of how programmes can be context sensitive and able to build in and make relevant use of school leaders' knowledge. For example, the SQH involves an in-depth analysis of a school prior to leaders undertaking the development of a School Improvement Plan. This requires sensitivity to the school context and relies on school leaders' knowledge of their circumstances. Similarly, the home school project that is part of the NPQH project suggests participants will have opportunities to adapt their strategies to their contexts. However, the extent to which participants are able to do this is not clear.

The PQP explicitly states that it recognises participants' contexts and claims to explore topics and issues of particular relevance to the context in which the participants work or may work. It claims that instructors within this programme use the principles of adult learning, utilise prior learning, capitalise on participants' experiences and respond to individual needs.

Criterion 9: partnership powered

The literature suggests that professional learning programmes are enriched by the support and engagement of external agencies (Brundrett and Crawford 2008). The logic of the argument presented is that when professional learning providers form partnerships with associations, universities and the broader professional world in the development and delivery of programmes, participants are seen to gain from the partnership's collective knowledge and experience. Brundrett and Crawford (2008) report that some countries have chosen to locate leadership training in universities, specially created institutions or in conjunction and collaboration with private organisations to good effect. However, whilst an international trend to draw on conceptions of leadership from business and industry may be viewed by some as a sensible way of ensuring that programmes are informed by best practice, others may see it as 'a dangerous dalliance with market-driven ideologies that may diminish the social dimension of education' (2008, p. 3).

The notion of partnerships and external support from organisations inside and outside education appears to be a strong feature of several of the programmes

reviewed. These included the NPQH (England), the SQH (Scotland) and the PQP (Ontario). Partnerships are offered in the NPQH through coaching and support in the participants' home school and placement school. Successful completion of the SQH is credited towards Certificate and Diploma-level university qualifications, suggesting that a partnership has been established. A comparison between the participant's school and another organisation in relation to an aspect of leadership and management suggests that further partnerships may also have been established. The PQP (Ontario) is offered by a range of universities as well as professional organisations that appear to have contributed to its development as well as its delivery. Participants thus have the opportunity to access the skills and knowledge shared by academics and course leaders as well as to undertake a leadership practicum in the wider professional world. The engagement of partners in the development and delivery of programmes from other countries appears to be less evident. For example, the First Time Principals (New Zealand) was developed by the University of Auckland. Partners were not evident in the documents accessed.

Criterion 10: effects oriented

According to the literature (Cowie and Crawford 2007, Southworth 2009), the providers of professional learning need to commit to the evaluation of the effects of their programmes on leaders and the associated school practices to which the learning applies. We believe that, as does Bush (2009), both immediate and long-term measures are needed to determine the lasting effects of programmes. We believe a stronger commitment to research into and evaluation of leadership development programmes and opportunities is necessary. This should include investigations of the ways and the extent to which leaders apply what they have learned in their schools and its effects on teachers, on teaching and learning and, ultimately, on student outcomes.

Scottish programmes appeared to have the strongest focus on evaluating effects both on leaders as well as on school practices. The Flexible Route to Headship has coaches and a field assessor who all undertake the formative and summative assessment of participants. The information that we reviewed describes the ongoing evaluation of the programme and its effects on the school leaders involved. In the SQH, participants are assessed in each of the five courses within the programme. These are embedded in the school context and require critical reflection on workplace results and personal learning.

In the NPQH (England), the gateway to headship entry (assessment prior to entry) and final assessment are undertaken as part of the programme. Further evaluation of the programme is not evident in the documents available. The PQP (Ontario) also includes assessment of participants in the programme. However, the impact of their learning beyond the programme is not evident in available documents. In other programmes, how effects are evaluated is not clear. For example, in the documents accessed on the First Time Principals (New Zealand), how its three modules are assessed and how the programme is evaluated are not made explicit. The L5 Leadership programme (South Australia) appears to rely on self-reflection and self-assessment. Here also, further evaluation of the effects of the programme on leaders was not evident from documents available.

In the following section we consider the potential use and general applicability of these 10 criteria in determining the quality and value of professional learning programmes and in making design decisions.

Potential use and applicability

The purpose of this paper has been to apply the 10 criteria distilled from literature on leadership learning to a range of programmes in the hope of illustrating their potential use. It was not our intent to provide an overall judgement or rating of each programme, as we did not have sufficient information to do so. What we hoped to do was to illustrate the usefulness of the criteria as a research-validated framework to guide the systematic evaluation of professional learning programmes and to inform their design.

We believe the exercise has confirmed that the 10 criteria, representing what is considered important in the research literature, were useful in identifying and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the leadership development programmes we selected to review. It is clear that aspects of at least seven of the criteria were at least partially addressed in many of the programmes we examined and could be described as strengths in some. These strengths were: goal oriented, research informed, time rich, practice centred, purpose designed, peer supported and context sensitive. Criteria that may need closer attention during the redesign of the programmes we have examined are: those related to a programme's philosophy (i.e. the programme's informing assumptions about knowledge and human nature); goals related to school improvement and student achievement; leadership and learning research; and time allocation and use.

In our subjective view, further consideration also needs to be given to two of the 10 criteria when designing and delivering programmes. The first of these relates to the formation of partnerships and the way that these can contribute to a much broader and richer learning experience for participants than that possible without this outreach. Whilst building and working with partners can be a challenge, the possibilities for widening horizons that arise, when organisations including businesses, teaching and leadership councils, and communities are involved in the planning and delivery of programmes, are boundless.

The second criterion we suggest needs closer attention in programme design and delivery is a commitment to evaluating programme effects. We argue that the ways effects are to be evaluated should be established during the design of the programme and should be closely linked to its structure and learning components. In our opinion, the focus should be on the long-term impact of the programme on the participants themselves and their work, the teachers with whom they work and their principals. Evaluation therefore needs to be undertaken some time after participants have completed a programme to ensure that programme effects are accurately revealed when and where they occur.

The task we set ourselves has confirmed our belief that the set of 10 criteria drawn from the leadership development research literature constitutes a useful framework no matter the international source of the leadership programme. Taking these criteria directly into programme design, however, is no easy task. They must be conscientiously addressed. Programme planners need a strong theoretical framework, research-based findings and practical experience to translate the criteria into effective programme delivery.

Conclusion

We have used examples from a range of national and international programmes to illustrate the potential use and applicability of 10 criteria to help make design decisions about high-quality professional school leadership learning programmes. Judgements made against these criteria can help ensure that evaluation is a structured, reflective process capable of exposing opportunities for further programme improvement. These 10 criteria may not form the foundation for a 'perfect 10', but we believe they offer a start to those developing a set of robust practices to assist them to evaluate the quality of current leadership learning provision, a need persuasively argued by Hallinger (2003) and Bush (2009).

Funding

Funding was received from the QELi to undertake evaluation of their Emerging Principals Professional Development Program. This evaluation is referred to in the paper.

References

- Bishop, R., 2011. How effective leaders reduce educational disparities. In: J. Robertson and H. Timperley, eds. *Leadership and learning*. London: Sage, 27–40.
- Brundrett, M. and Crawford, M., 2008. Introduction: educational leadership in a global environment. In: M. Brundrett and M. Crawford, eds. *Developing school leaders: an international perspective*. London: Routledge, 1–6.
- Bush, T., 2009. Leadership development and school improvement: contemporary issues in leadership development. *Educational review*, 61 (4), 375–389.
- Cowie, M. and Crawford, M., 2007. Principal preparation – still an act of faith? *School leadership & management*, 27 (2), 129–146.
- Darling-Hammond, L., et al., 2007. *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Day, C., et al., 2010. *Ten strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: The National College for School Leadership.
- Dempster, N., 2001. The professional development of school principals: a fine balance. Professional lecture, 24 May. Griffith University Public Lecture Series.
- Dempster, N., Lovett, S., and Fluckiger, B., 2011. *Content and strategies to develop school leadership: a select literature review*. Melbourne: The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
- Dempster, N., Lovett, S., and Fluckiger, B., 2012. *An evaluation of emerging principals professional development program*. Report to Queensland Education Leadership Institute, 30 June.
- Fink, D., 2011. The succession challenge: warm bodies or leaders of learning? In: T. Townsend and J. MacBeath, eds. *Springer international handbook on leadership for learning. Part one*. Dordrecht: Springer, 589–602.
- Hallinger, P., ed., 2003. *Reshaping the landscape of school leadership development: contexts of learning*. Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Hallinger, P., 2011. Leadership for learning: lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of educational administration*, 49 (2), 125–142.
- Hopkins, D., 2008. Realising the potential of system leadership. In: B. Pont, D. Nusche, and D. Hopkins, eds. *Improving school leadership. Volume 2: case studies on system leadership* [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, 21–32. Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/44375122.pdf> [Accessed 6 November 2013].
- Huber, S.G., 2011. Leadership for learning – learning for leadership: the impact of professional development. In: T. Townsend and J. MacBeath, eds. *Springer international handbook on leadership for learning. Part one*. Dordrecht: Springer, 635–652.

- Leithwood, K., *et al.*, 2006. *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: NCSL and DFES.
- MacBeath, J., 2006. The talent enigma. *International journal of educational leadership*, 9 (3), 183–204.
- McKinsey and Company, 2010. *Capturing the leadership premium: how the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future* [online]. Available from: http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/schoolleadership_final.pdf [Accessed 29 October 2013].
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 2008. *Improving school leadership. Volume 1: policy and practice* [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/44374889.pdf> [Accessed 29 October 2013].
- Robertson, J., 2008. *Coaching educational leadership: building leadership capacity through partnership*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Robinson, V., 2007. *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why*. ACEL Monograph Series, 41. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Leaders.
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., and Lloyd, C., 2009. *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why. Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Southworth, G., 2009. Learning-centred leadership. In: B. Davies, ed. *The essentials of school leadership*. London, UK: Sage, 91–111.
- Swaffield, S., 2004. Critical friends: supporting leadership, improving learning. *Improving schools*, 7 (3), 267–278.
- Waters, J., Marzano, R., and McNulty, S., 2003. *Balanced leadership: what 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.