

School Leadership as an Influence on Teacher Quality

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The Policy Context

I will begin with a brief consideration of the role of policy in framing teacher educators' and teachers' work. I do so because teacher educators' and teachers' work always takes place within broad policy mandates and policies over which they have little, if any, control. In this respect, they are semi-professionals who are in part charged with carrying out the policy decisions of government on behalf of society but who are also expected to make contextually wise and sensitive decisions about students' needs and progress in what Shulman (1986) long ago called the 'unavoidable uncertainties' of classrooms. I call them semi-professionals, not for the purpose of being critical, but because recognising and giving voice to the everyday tensions present in carrying out their work provides us with opportunities to understand them better.

In China, government reform initiatives since 2001 have increased the direct responsibilities of school principals for curriculum leadership (Ministry of Education 2001) and, since 2011, for the implementation of teachers' professional standards (Ministry of Education 2011, 2013). This has brought the working responsibilities of Chinese principals much closer to those of principals in Western societies. The norms now in China, it has been claimed, are, 'to move students to the centre of teaching and learning and to transform teaching and learning to foster such capacities as creativity, innovation, collaboration, self-expression, engagement, enjoyment of learning, inquiry skills, problem-solving abilities and the ability to apply knowledge in practice' (Haiyan et al. 2015: 98).

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Most people would agree that school standards, conditions for teaching, learning, and curriculum, are affected significantly by these and other policy initiatives, and that these are a continuing force which influence teachers work and lives. The strength of the policy voice, however, has varied historically between countries. For example, China has in the past had a school system dominated by the need for students to do well in national examinations in order to attend the best universities. In other South East Asian cultures similar importance is attached to this priority; whereas in Scandinavia and Southern Europe this has been less important. However, advances in technology have enabled more close scrutiny of the relationships between teachers' work and student progress and achievement, comparisons between student test results in different countries and educational 'policy borrowing' by governments. Where countries are positioned in international student performance 'league tables' now counts for more, since educational performance, however narrowly measured, is perceived to influence the relative strengths of national economies. OECD's programme for international student assessment (PISA) is a prime example of new instrumentalist cultures in which most teachers work and which, in the view of some (Firestone et al. 2004) have sometimes resulted in 'teaching to the test' at the expense of teaching for thinking.

It is legitimate for policy makers in Western nations to be concerned about teacher quality because (i) teachers are acknowledged to be a key element in the successful implementation of education reform to raise standards of learning and achievement; (ii) there is evidence of a substantial variation in their quality in terms of raising levels of student achievement (Engel et al. 2014: 37); (iii) schools which serve highly disadvantaged urban and rural communities are staffed by a disproportionately high number of inexperienced and less well qualified teachers than others and experience a higher level of teacher (and principal) turnover (Boyd et al. 2005); (iv) there is a high wastage rate of teachers in many countries in the first four years; and (v) there is a well-reported perceived theory-practice gap between what is taught in pre-service teacher education programmes in universities and what is needed for teaching effectively in schools. In almost every country, teacher education continues to be criticised by both students and policy makers for its lack of relevance to practice (Zeichner 2010; Darling-Hammond et al. 2012).

Lack of Research

Whilst there has been much ideologically—driven research at the **macro** level on equity in education, performativity, and the negative effects of central reforms on teacher professionalism, there has been much less conceptual and empirical research on **meso**—level school level factors which influence teachers' long term commitment to teaching, health and well-being, and loyalty to the schools in which they teach. Less well researched, also, is the extent to which teachers sustain their commitment and how teaching quality is built and sustained over time. Notable

exceptions to this are the on-going work on early career teachers in the USA of Susan Moore-Johnson and her colleagues at Harvard (Moore-Johnson 2007), the development of the notion of ‘professional capital’ by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), David Hansen’s seminal work on the call to teach (Hansen 2005), early years teacher resilience by Bruce Johnson and his colleagues in Australia (2012), and our own extensive mixed methods research in the UK on teachers’ work, lives and effectiveness (Day 2008).

Yet even in this body of research, little connection has been made between the quest to build and sustain quality in testing times (Day and Gu 2014) and the powerful influence played by school principals whose work, it has been argued forcibly, is second only to that of teachers in its influence on students learning and achievement (Leithwood et al. 2006). There have been too few studies which have sought to examine whether and to what extent teacher quality fluctuates and is or is not sustained over a career and the relationship between teacher health and well-being and student educational outcomes. In China, research on school principals and their work revealed 153 published papers and of these only 17 were empirical (Haiyan et al. 2015). In a survey of 331 principals in Shanghai’s Pudong district, Jiang et al. (2010) found that the three factors given the most importance to school success were teachers’ professional capacity, policy support, resources from local education bureaux and the quality of the student intake (cited in Haiyan et al. 2015). The omission of principals is, to say the least, surprising, given the range and depth of research internationally on the influence of school principals on school success (e.g. Leithwood et al. 2007; Mulford and Silins 2003; Day et al. 2000; Hallinger 2010).

Although initial teacher education programmes influence the beliefs, values, knowledge and teaching competencies of their students over the short term, over a much longer period, the physical, social and psychological conditions experienced by teachers are likely to have a more powerful negative or positive influence on their dispositions, levels of commitment and capacities for resilience (Day and Gu 2014), and willingness and abilities to engage in the everyday challenges and vulnerabilities of striving to achieve quality teaching. A key issue for all principals concerned with raising standards of teaching, learning and achievement, then, is to manage change whilst building and sustaining stability of whole school vision and direction, and, within this, teachers’ capacities and abilities to teach to their best. It is the primary responsibility of principals to create, work with and sustain cultures of high expectation that are conducive to the learning and achievement of all students and all teachers. Research demonstrates that successful schools are staffed by, regardless of policy and social and geographical and national contexts and cultures, principals and teachers who place values and broader educational purposes and practices before the slavish implementation of policy dictates and who are able, also, to produce the positive student outcomes which policy makers demand (Day and Leithwood 2007). Teacher quality is at the heart of school improvement and success.

Teacher Quality

Teacher quality is an imprecise term. Although it is sometimes associated in research (e.g. Engel et al. 2014) with types and levels of entry qualifications, for example, graduate degree level entry and pre-service certification, we know that these only provide one set of indicators of quality and that by themselves they are not reliable, since academic qualifications do not guarantee excellence in teaching. In those countries and jurisdictions whose students achieve well in international league tables (e.g. South Korea, Singapore, Shanghai and Finland), teachers have high qualifications and status and in-school collaborations are high. Other, perhaps more important, indicators of quality are classroom management skills, the ability to inspire a love of learning, subject and pedagogical knowledge, a strong sense of vocation, reflexivity, a desire to continue to learn and, of course, the teacher's contributions to students' academic results.

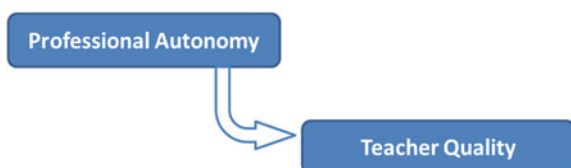
Yet there is an emerging body of research, which suggests that key to enabling the sustained application of these indicators is teachers' professional identity and, within this, their sense of self-efficacy, job fulfilment and well-being. We know from a range of research internationally that teachers' capacities and motivations to perform successfully in the workplace throughout their careers are not guaranteed, that these may fluctuate and that their work and lives are moderated and mediated by seven contributory influences:

- (i) external factors: the extent to which school teachers and teacher education programmes are able to meet but also go beyond the specified implementation needs of government policy at any given time;
- (ii) societal expectations: the expectations of parents and the community;
- (iii) practice-based results: the measurable test and examination results of students;
- (iv) internal expectations: standards defined by individual teachers;
- (v) the school environments and cultures in which they work;
- (vi) the quality of school principals;
- (vii) teachers' own motivations, commitment, resilience and emotional health.

In this chapter, I will highlight three areas which are key indicators of teacher quality and which are likely to be influenced directly and indirectly by school principals:

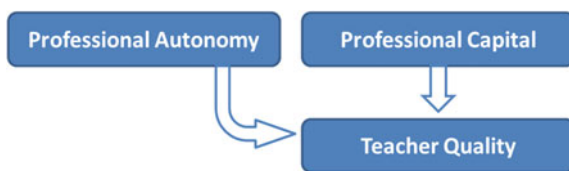
1. Professional Autonomy
2. Professional Capital
3. Teacher Commitment and Expertise

1. Professional Autonomy



A recurring issue in writings and conversations in the West is about the effects of the increased policy voice e.g. through OECD (PISA) reports which compare student results across countries and jurisdictions on teachers' professional selves and practices. Critics refer to central government reforms as 'neo-liberal', 'results driven', claiming that such 'performativity' agendas have resulted not only in a new transparency and increased bureaucratic burdens on teachers which have led to a lowering of morale and a 'de-professionalization' of teachers' work. As evidence of this, they point to a decline in teacher autonomy (Apple 2011; Ball 2012; Ozga 2012). Foucault's (1977) early work has often been used to explain what is said to be happening. In this, he suggested that 'professional autonomy' of teachers is illusory and not real, that it is constrained by what he called, 'regimes of truth' in which teachers, 'have made the society's disciplinary techniques and ruling ways of thinking very much their own and, by doing so, have come to believe and behave *as if* they were free and autonomous' (Foucault 1986: 221, in Raaen 2011: 628). From this perspective, '*Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application*' (Raaen 2011: 629). Raaen (2011) suggests, however, that in Foucault's later works, he changed the focus of his position by proposing an 'ethics of the self.' By seeking knowledge about the circumstances that influence the way we think, we can develop an ethical system, 'that can make way for an autonomy based on an outspoken, frank and critical thinking [mastery of self] that breaks with the normalisation pressure faced by individuals in today's society' (Raaen 2011: 631). It would seem, then, that schools and those who work in them need not be regarded as victims of repressive educational policies or unwitting carriers of their values but, on the contrary, are potentially able to exercise degrees of autonomy. However, the understandings and applications of autonomy in practice are likely to be influenced by national culture, traditions and, at school level, and especially the principal and other leaders.

2. Professional Capital



Teachers' work in the twenty-first century especially, if it is to be at its best, requires higher levels of intellectual and emotional energy than ever before. It requires investment in what Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan have described as 'professional capital' (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). This is an amalgam of 'human, social, and decisional' capital (ibid: 3). They suggested that:

Unless you deliberately learn how to get better so that you can teach the students of today for the world of tomorrow, you will not be teaching like a pro. You will just be an enthusiastic amateur.

(Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 46)

In doing so, they are both emphasising, as others before have done (e.g. Brookfield 1998; Day 1999) the need for teachers to be aware of and engage in lifelong learning. Their work draws also upon and extends research by Leana (2011) in New York elementary schools. She found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that there were strong associations between the combination of individual qualifications and talent (human capital) and ‘the frequency and focus of conversations and interactions with peers (social capital) that centred on instruction’ (cited in Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 3). These resulted in pupils making higher achievement gains in mathematics. These were similar to findings of Bryk and Schneider (2002), who found that relational trust was a key factor in pupils’ achievement in maths and reading in elementary schools in Chicago; and Karen Seashore Louis (2007), who identified organisational trust as a key factor in improving and effective high schools in North America. It is not difficult to see a connection between relational and organisational trust and the quality of the work of the school principal in shaping the learning and achievement culture.

Hargreaves and Fullan define the third element of professional capital, decisional capital, as:

The capital that professional acquire and accumulate through structured and unstructured experience, practice, and reflection – capital that enables them to make wise judgements in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible evidence to guide them.

(Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 93–4)

The essence of professionalism, then, is the possession of discretionary capital. However, it is worth unpacking what might be meant by ‘ability’ or ‘expertise’ in the context of the quality of discretionary capital and what strengthens or weakens the willingness and capacities of teachers to make ‘wise’ judgments. At the core of the capacity to exercise discretionary capital are teacher commitment and teacher expertise.

3. Teacher Commitment and Expertise



According to Stobart (2014), experts are likely to excel in:

- Choosing the appropriate strategy to use;
- Generating the best solution, often faster and more accurately than others;
- Using superior detection and recognition, for example, seeing patterns and ‘deep structures’ of a problem;

- Applying extensive qualitative analyses to a problem;
- Accurately monitoring their own performance; and
- Retrieving relevant information more effectively.

In the classrooms of teachers who exercise discretionary capital we might expect to see both teachers and students engaged in ‘surface, strategic and deep’ learning. Stobart (2014: 70) provides details of the defining features of each approach (Table 1):

Stobart goes on to cite a study of 25 exceptional teachers in New South Wales, Australia by Ayres et al. (2004: 61) whose student examination results were in the top 1% nationally for at least six consecutive years in a range of schools:

Table 1 Approaches to learning and studying

Approach	Defining features
Surface Reproducing	Treating the course as unrelated bits of knowledge
Intention: to cope with course requirements	Memorizing facts and carrying out procedures routinely Finding difficulty in making sense of new ideas Seeing little value or meaning in either courses or tasks sets Studying without reflecting on either purpose or strategy Feeling under pressure and worry about work
Strategic Reflective organising	
Intention: to achieve the highest possible grades	Putting consistent effort into studying Managing time and effort effectively Finding the right conditions and materials for studying Monitoring the effectiveness of ways of studying Being alert to assessment requirements and criteria Gathering work to the perceived preferences of lecturers
Deep Seeking meaning	Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience
Intention: to develop ideas for yourself	Looking for patterns and underlying principles Checking evidence and relating it to conclusions Examining logic and argument cautiously and critically Being aware of understanding developing while learning Becoming actively interested in course content

Stobart 2014: 70

While teachers used a wide range of teaching strategies to build student understanding, a key common factor was an emphasis on having students think, solve problems and apply knowledge. Simply reporting back knowledge or practising formulae outside the context of application was unusual. These teachers strongly saw their role in the classroom as challenging students, rather than ‘spoon-feeding’ information. They demonstrated ways of building notes and assisted in this process, but were never observed dictating a complete set of notes or having students simply copy notes without a context developed or a lead-up involving student responses.

(Stobart 2014: 73)

It seems that, in terms of ‘decisional capital’, these attributes of expertise may be regarded as essential, as part of a passion for teaching, in the process of making wise judgments. The *best* teachers are always seeking to improve, regardless of their age and experience. They never remain within the ‘comfort zone’ of past and present knowledge and practice. However, not every teacher will necessarily always be able to teach in these ways. They may lack the expertise to do so, or, more importantly, the commitment, resilience, sense of engagement and wellbeing which are necessary pre-requisites. These will be influenced positively or negatively by particular school environments, cultures and leadership; and they may fluctuate as a result of both anticipated and unanticipated experiences and events.

In the ‘paradox of expert performance’, Matthew Syed claims that:

Excellence is about stepping outside the comfort zone...Progress is built, in effect, upon the foundations of necessary failure.

(Syed 2010: 79, cited in Stobart 2014: 50)

Yet stepping outside of one’s comfort zone is not easy. It requires courage and confidence in self and the support of others. ‘Expertise’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘decisional capital’ cannot be regarded as inborn or stable qualities that are easily acquired and sustained.

An Educational Myth

The continuing passion to learn and, where appropriate, change one’s thinking, planning and practices which may have taken years to develop, do not necessarily increase with age and experience. They can fluctuate according to personal and professional contexts. We know from research that not all teachers are always able to adapt successfully to the inevitable changes in expectations, policies and pedagogies that will occur over their careers in teaching. The extent to which they can adapt successfully depends upon their willingness, capacity and ability to do so; and these in turn depend upon their whether and to what extent the changes are aligned with their own educational values, the interaction with cultures which influence these and their personal, workplace and policy contexts, and their sense of efficacy, agency and professional identity. Interestingly, despite received wisdom, in recent

empirical research, teachers' years of experience have been not been found to be useful as a directly associated measure of teachers' willingness or ability to change. Nor have age and experience been associated with teacher quality. Recent research has shown, for example, that teachers do not always learn from experience. Our own large scale, longitudinal research findings about teachers' work and lives in different professional life phases is contrary to the belief in some cultures which suggest that they move in stages, in an upward direction, from being novices to (eventually) becoming experts who no longer need to learn (Day et al. 2007). In fact, we found that in early, middle and later career phases, teachers in each of these phases associate their level of commitment with their capacity to teach to their best and that levels of commitment are also statistically associated with their students' test and examination results.

Teachers' commitment and capacities to be resilient are influenced positively or negatively by their working environments, colleague relationships, leadership, the strength of their sense of vocation and moral purpose, colleagues, and unanticipated changes in personal circumstances which may affect their sense of well-being. A recent report examined the literature on associations between teachers' health and well-being and student outcomes.

Employees in good health can be up to three times as productive as those in poor health; can experience fewer motivational problems, are more resilient to change and they are more likely to be engaged with the business's priorities.....In addition, it is likely that presenteeism, defined as reduced performance and productivity due to ill health while at work, could cost employers two to seven times more than absenteeism.

(Bajorek et al. 2014: 7)

Whilst the authors did not find direct cause and effect relationships, they found that there were close associations between health and well-being and teacher effectiveness and that, 'having a good teacher (defined as those within the top quarter of teachers in terms of their effectiveness) as opposed to a mediocre or poor teacher (defined as those within the bottom quarter) made a big difference in student exam results' (Slater et al. 2009, cited in Bajorek et al. 2014). Moreover, 'if a student from an economically deprived community had effective teachers and a non-poor student had ineffective teachers, then the gap in outcomes would reduce. Another study of 24,200 staff in 246 primary and 182 secondary schools in England examined three aspects of well-being: (i) feeling valued and cared for, (ii) feeling overloaded and (iii) job stimulation and enjoyment. It found a statistically significant association between staff well-being and student examination results and that 8% of variance in examination results can be attributed to teacher well-being (Dewberry and Briner 2007).

Teacher commitment, well-being, expertise, and thus quality, are, then, likely to be subject to fluctuation in response to personal, organisational and socio-cultural factors; and because conditions, policies and personal circumstances, needs and demands change, sometimes in unpredictable ways, teachers' motivations, learning and development needs and demands for workplace performance need to be supported, challenged, reviewed, enhanced and renewed.

Successful Schools, Successful School Leadership



No one is better placed to influence teachers' quality directly and indirectly than the school head teacher/principal. Being engaged in building and sustaining expertise requires in teachers, for example, the confidence to take risks, engage in close and regular examination of their own practices as well as policy contexts in which they take place; and a belief, regardless of age and experience, that they, as well as their students, need to continue to learn; and the capacity to be resilient. The school principal and other senior staff have key responsibilities, with the teachers, in building and sustaining teachers' expertise, commitment, resilience and sense of wellbeing.

We know that principals of successful schools have the second greatest influence (after that of the teacher) on student learning and achievement (Leithwood et al. 2006), that they exercise such influence largely through creating the optimum conditions for excellence in teaching and learning, that other work is driven by strong moral and ethical values and that the largest effect size (0.84) of five dimensions identified by Robinson et al. (2009) in their meta-analyses of research about effective principals is promotion of and engagement in teachers' continuing professional learning and development.

Stobart suggests that the 'expert' school promotes a culture in which teachers feel able to take risks and that [effective] school leaders model this. He suggests that 'daring' school leaders:

- Support learning in depth even though that may mean less coverage;
- Want teachers to get well beyond 0.5% of lesson time being spent in group learning;
- Would welcome more time being spent in classroom dialogue and rich questioning;
- Encourage teachers to conduct at least one 'risky' lesson a week, which involves doing something new for which the outcome is not assured;
- Support teachers who want to do things differently for reasons they can justify;
- Encourage collaboration in researching new lessons on difficult topics.

(Stobart 2014: 160)

Moore Johnson and her colleagues (2007) identified the quality of support provided by principals and colleagues as key factors in teacher retention. Similar findings resulted from research in England (Day et al. 2007, 2011a, b); and research internationally on effective and successful school principals consistently reveals the impact on teacher quality of their values, qualities and strategies. In these successful schools, regardless of socio-economic contexts and country specific cultures, teachers have high expectations of themselves and their students, a strong sense of moral purpose, high levels of motivation and commitment, a sense of job satisfaction and fulfilment, collegiality and trust, academic optimism and a strong capacity for resilience (e.g. Day and Leithwood 2007; Robinson et al. 2009; Day and Gurr 2014; Tschannen-Moran 2004). So it does not make sense to discuss **teacher** quality without also taking into account the responsibilities of school principals and other school leaders to build teacher commitment, expertise and capacity to be resilient and to actively put into place the conditions which ensure **teaching** quality. For example, according to one influential review of employee engagement, a key indicator of commitment, the main factors that influence quality of work are:

- Leaders who support employees and see where they fit into the bigger organisational picture;
- Effective line managers who respect, develop and reward their staff;
- Consultation that values the voice of employees and listens to their views; and
- Concerns and relationships based on trust and shared values.

(MacLeod and Clarke 2009, cited in Bajorek et al. 2014: 8)

It is important, then, that teachers' workload and environments are well managed, that they have support from colleagues and their heads of department that relationships between staff are harmonious whilst at the same time driven by a desire to learn and improve, that they have clear understandings of the expectations of quality and that they have a sense of control and influence on how they carry out their work. It is equally important that where there is change, it is well led and managed.

Figure 1 below illustrates key dimensions of effective leadership derived from a three year mixed methods national research project in England into the effects of principals of improving and successful schools on measurable student outcomes (Day 2011; Day et al. 2011a, b). The inner circle illustrates the core focus of leaders' attention, the inner ring their core strategies, and the outer ring the actions they take in support of these strategies. The building of trust is an intrinsic part of successful leaders' work, embedded within each of the core strategies and an essential part of the actions in the outer ring.

Defining the vision, values and direction: building professional trust. Effective heads have a very strong and clear vision and set of values for their school, which heavily influence their actions and the actions of others. They establish and maintain a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school within a climate of evidence informed professional trust. Values are shared widely, clearly



Fig. 1 Dimensions of successful leadership

understood and a range of ‘fit for purpose’ classroom practices are used by all staff. They act as a touchstone against which the efficacy and effectiveness of all new developments, policies or initiatives are tested.

Improving conditions for teaching and learning. Successful heads identify the need to improve the conditions in which the quality of teaching can be maximised and pupils’ learning and performance enhanced. They develop strategies to improve the school buildings and facilities. By changing the physical environment for the schools and improving the classrooms, they confirm the important connection between high-quality conditions for teaching and learning, and staff and pupil wellbeing and achievement.

Redesigning the organisation: aligning roles and responsibilities. Successful heads purposefully and progressively redesign their organisational structures, refine roles and responsibilities and distribute leadership at times and in ways that promote greater staff engagement and ownership which, in turn, provided greater opportunities for student learning. While the exact nature and timing will vary from school to school, there is a consistent pattern of broadening participation in decision making at all levels.

Enhancing teaching and learning. Successful heads continually look for new ways to improve teaching, learning and achievement. They provide a safe environment for teachers to try new ways of working and alternate approaches that

might be more effective. Where this is done, staff respond positively to the opportunity. It affects the way they see themselves as professionals and improves their sense of self-efficacy, commitment and job satisfaction. This, in turn, has a positive impact on the way they interact with pupils and other members of staff and their professional capital.

Redesigning and enriching the curriculum. Successful heads focus on redesigning and enriching the curriculum as a way of deepening and extending engagement and improving achievement. Academic attainment is not seen to be in competition with personal and social development: rather, the two complement one another. They adapt the curriculum to broaden learning opportunities and improve access for all pupils, with the emphasis on ‘stage not age’ learning. Changes to build students’ creativity, problem-solving capacities and self-esteem, feature heavily in the curriculum, as does a focus on developing key skills for life, without neglecting the academic. There is a recognition that when pupils enjoy learning, they are more engaged and that when they are more engaged they are more effective learners. Successful heads also emphasise the provision of a broad range of extracurricular activities, including lunchtime and after-school clubs, as well as activities during school holidays.

Enhancing teacher quality (including succession planning). Successful heads provide a rich variety of professional learning and development opportunities for staff as part of their core drive to raise standards, sustain motivation and commitment and retain high quality staff. They place a high premium on internally led professional development and learning, teachers and support staff are also encouraged to take part in a wide range of in-service training, and are given opportunities to train for external qualifications. This combination of external and internal continuing professional learning and development is used to maximise potential and develop staff in diverse areas. Succession planning and targeted recruitment are strategies which are also adopted by effective heads.

Building relationships inside the school community. Successful heads develop and sustain positive relationships with staff at all levels, making them feel valued and involved. They demonstrate concern for the professional and personal wellbeing of staff. The relationship between heads and senior leadership teams (SLTs), in particular, indicate trust and mutual respect.

Building relationships outside the school community. Building and improving the reputation of the school and engaging with the wider community is seen by successful heads as being essential to achieving long-term success. Heads and their senior leadership teams develop positive relationships with community leaders and build a web of links across the school to other organisations and individuals. Strong links with key stakeholders in the local community are also seen to benefit the school.

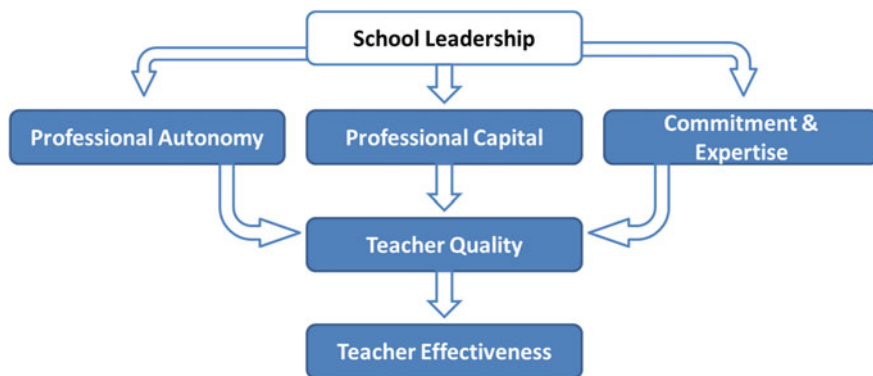
Common values. Successful heads achieve improved student performance, not only through the strategies they use but also through the core values and personal qualities they demonstrate in their daily interactions. As Fig. 1 illustrates, they place pupil wellbeing, learning and achievement at the heart of all their decisions.

Conclusions

We know from a range of related research the important contributions to teacher effectiveness of, for example, academic optimism (Tschannen-Moran 2004), ‘hope’ (Bullough 2011), ‘integrity’ (Santoro 2011), ‘moral purpose’ (Hansen 2005) and a strong sense of stable positive identity (Beijaard 1995). So building and sustaining teachers who are academically optimistic and hopeful, as well as knowledgeable and pedagogically skilled, with a strong, positive sense of professional autonomy, expertise, commitment and identity is a priority for all who wish for high quality teachers and teaching. We also know that these are important to the wellbeing of teachers, that wellbeing concerns the cognitive and the emotional, that it is associated with the health, energy and resilience—and that having both or not having both is likely to affect the ways in which decisional capital operates in the conditions of ‘unavoidable uncertainty’ which exist in classrooms.

We know also that the qualities and skills associated with the best teaching and the best teachers are not innate or fixed. They are subject to variation over the course of a teacher’s life and are influenced by external socio-cultural and policy change, internal organisational and personal factors. The exercise of ‘decisional capital’, professional autonomy, health and well-being and the building, sustaining and renewal of commitment and expertise are likely to be subject to the capacity of the individual and will be influenced positively and negatively by the strength of individual moral purpose but also by the values, qualities, strategies and relationships of school leaders.

If we are to consider ways to understand better, enhance and continue to improve teacher education programmes and teaching and learning in schools, to build and sustain the motivations, capabilities, commitment, expertise, health, wellbeing, and resilience of teachers and continue to raise the achievements of students, then teacher educators, principals and other school leaders must be willing and able to invest in the professional capital, commitment and expertise of all their teachers; and policy makers must also invest in the quality of teacher educators and school leaders.



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