

European Methodological Framework for Facilitating Collaborative Learning for Teachers (EFFeCT) project

UK Case Study 3 – Regional level

The HertsCam Network Med – Leading Teaching and Learning

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Context

The HertsCam MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning is an integral part of the HertsCam Network. The HertsCam Network is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to support teacher and school development through programmes that enable teachers and other education practitioners to exercise leadership for the purposes of practice development, collaborative school-based innovation and knowledge building. Further information about HertsCam is given in Appendix 1, An Introduction to the HertsCam Network.

The MEd has existed since the beginning of the HertsCam network and first started recruiting in 1999. The Master's programme reflects the aims and principles of the network and 'developed ways of working in keeping with a partnership-based approach, for example employing graduates of the MEd as supervisors and contributors to the taught programme' (Frost et al 2016: 4). Between 1999 and 2013, 253 students were recruited, of which 215 (85%) graduated (Appendix 2). Since 2015, University of Hertfordshire has re-validated the MEd and awards the master's degrees.

The life of the HertsCam MEd can be divided into two phases of development. Phase 1, which includes its foundation, lasted from 1998 to 2014, during which time it was run in partnership with the University of Cambridge. The relationship with the University of Cambridge changed over this period. A paper by the network explains that 'when the University raised fee levels and insisted that it was not legitimate for practitioners to teach on the masters course, the [HertsCam] Committee took the bold step of bringing the relationship with Cambridge to a close and looking for a more suitable academic partner' (Frost et al 2016: 4). This led to phase 2, the current phase. In 2014-15, the programme was reviewed and designed as a master's taught entirely by school teachers and the programme re-validated by the University of Hertfordshire. Further detail is given in the section on 'Practice' below.

Methodology

The UK cases of good practice for the EFFeCT project consist of nested case studies, distributed across the levels of the school education system: School (1); Local (1); Regional (2); National/International (1). As nested cases studies, they are parts of a larger whole (the HertsCam Network) and have an integrity and meaning through that identity, over and above the individual characteristics of each case¹.

A participatory approach was taken to the case studies. That is, we sought to mobilise and engage with the knowledge of participants in the practice and to utilise information, reflections and systematic evaluations generated by those participants. The process was informed by well-established traditions of co-operative research with practitioners, such as PALAR (participatory action learning and action research) (Denis and Lehoux 2009: 367, Zuber-Skerritt 2011), bridging the researcher/practitioner divide. This meant, for example, discussing in-depth with representatives of the HertsCam Network the aims of the case studies and potential sources of

¹ See Thomas (2011) on types of case studies including nested case studies.

data generated within and by the Network, and seeking from them participant validation of our interpretative analysis. It also involved ourselves as researchers consciously integrating a critical, questioning approach into our examination of information sources and into our collective discussions of the research process and emerging findings, and sharing and discussing critical questions with representatives of the Network. In this way we sought to ensure there was reflexivity in the participatory research process (Denis and Lehoux 2009: 368).

The data examined for the purpose of the case study of the HertsCam MEd were primarily secondary sources, such as papers and an evaluation of the HertsCam network and information from the HertsCam website (detailed in the references). The case study also drew from planned meetings about the case studies: there were two exploratory and planning meetings with co-ordinators of the network in which the aims of the study, information on the masters and other aspects of the network were discussed and collected, as well as a focus group to explore questions arising from the analysis and discuss our interpretative analyses of the case studies².

The purpose of the examination was to analyse, in terms of the criteria of good practice (participative professionalism, deep level collaboration, equity and deep learning, plus factors helping and hindering the good practice):

- the stated aims, rationale, pedagogic principles of the masters programme
- the topics and focus of the masters programme (to consider to what extent they provide indicators of deep learning and advancing equity)

Limitations of the method in relation to the case study of the MEd are acknowledged. We recognise that the secondary data examined should not be approached as objective representations. This is not to assert that straightforwardly objective representations are possible. Rather, we are recognising that the publications and papers constituting the secondary data are created by the HertsCam Network and are the outcomes of numerous decisions about how to present the network and its activities. They provide partial though nevertheless illuminating insights into the latter. It is important to recognise, therefore, that triangulation of the secondary data was not feasible for the purposes of the MEd case study. For example, it was not possible in the time available to analyse directly the content of theses produced by the programme, to interview students or to seek views on the impact of masters projects from colleagues and school students.

Practice

As noted above, the HertsCam Network runs the MEd. Teachers from the network undertake the teaching on the masters programme and degrees are awarded by the University of Hertfordshire. Prior to validation of the revised masters programme by the University, the HertsCam teaching team followed 'a rigorous process of re-examining [the programme's] principles, re-designing, explaining from scratch, [and] reaffirming our practice' (Hill 2016: 6). For its part, the University followed the standard assessment procedure set out in its *Validation Handbook* (University of Hertfordshire 2015).

The average recruitment throughout the MEd's existence has been 20 (253 between 1999 and 2013), with an average of 17 reaching graduation (215 in the same period) (Appendix 2, and Wearing 2011: 29). It was noted in 2011 that (Wearing 2011: 29):

- approximately twice as many secondary as primary teachers had participated in the programme

² Two meetings were held (on 7/12/15 and 15/3/16), between the researchers (Amanda Roberts and Philip Woods {both meetings}, and Leo Chivers {first meeting}), David Frost (former Director of Programmes, HertsCam, and senior lecturer, University of Cambridge, UK) (both meetings) and Val Hill (Director of Programmes, HertsCam, and Assistant Headteacher, Birchwood School, Hertfordshire, UK) (first meeting). A focus group took place at the University of Hertfordshire on 25th April 2016, involving the researchers (Amanda Roberts and Philip Woods), David Frost, Sarah Lightfoot (deputy team leader of the MEd programme) and Gisela Redondo-Sama (Marie Curie Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Cambridge).

- only four were from nursery and infant schools and seven from special schools
- students also included 10 LA advisors or consultants.

The new phase of the MEd began recruitment in April 2015 and secured a cohort of 16 teachers (7 from primary school, 9 from secondary schools) (Hill 2016: 11).

Teachers undertake the MEd part-time over a two-year period. The local authority (Hertfordshire County Council) used to provide funding to cover the fees for the programme until about five years ago. Currently schools pay the bulk of each teacher's fee registered for the MEd in their school, the teachers meeting the balance themselves³. A not-for-profit company offering school improvement services in Hertfordshire and beyond - Herts for Learning - gives a grant to provide bursaries to MEd students⁴.

The programme consists of four sequential modules (Table 1) which enable the MEd student to plan and lead a development project that makes a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in their school or other setting and to base this project in a critical appreciation of relevant literature, concepts and domains of knowledge. Integral to the programme is enabling the MEd students to discuss their projects with other programme participants and a wider range of colleagues at HertsCam network events (HertsCam 2016: 3).

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| <p>Module 1: The analysis of institutional contexts for development work (30 credits) This module enables participants to engage in an initial exploration of their professional context in order to negotiate an agenda for practice development. This analysis will be illuminated by relevant literatures and conceptual frameworks introduced in the programme sessions.</p> |
| <p>Module 2: Improving teaching and learning: exploring starting points for development (30 credits) This module enables participants to explore the nature of pedagogy and examine in depth a particular aspect of professional practice drawing on relevant literatures and conceptual frameworks introduced in the programme sessions.</p> |
| <p>Module 3 Planning development project: project design (60 credits) This module enables participants to design and plan a development project. This involves the clarification of the focus of the project, analysis of the organisational context and the establishing of collaborative relationships on which leadership of the project will depend.</p> |
| <p>Module 4 Leading a development project (60 credits) This module enables participants to lead a development project that makes a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in the school or relevant setting. Critical reflection and the writing of a final report will contribute to our understanding of the leadership of change in organisations.</p> |

Table 1: Modules of MEd (HertsCam 2016: 2)

The rationale for the MEd is clear and distinctive, being described as a 'masters degree programme which is owned by and taught by serving teachers and designed to empower teachers and other educational workers as agents of change' (Frost et al 2016: 1) and as world-leading: 'We have what we think is the world's first masters programme taught entirely by teachers for the benefit of teachers and schools' (Hill 2016: 6). The aim of developing a type of professionalism is explicit. The programme

seeks to promote and actively cultivate a particular type of professionalism... whereby a teacher's professional identity has these dimensions:

- a member of a professional **community** rather than an individual practitioner;
- **agential**, engaging in innovation rather than complying with prescription from above;
- guided by educational **principles** and sense of moral purpose rather than by standards, rules and externally defined deficits;

³ The annual fee in 2016 was £2,975.00 (HertsCam 2016: 6).

⁴ Information on Herts for Learning is available at: <http://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk> The contribution from Herts for Learning amounted this year to £15,000, enabling a bursary of £500 per student to be provided.

- being a **creator of professional knowledge** through inquiry, development work and networking rather than relying on initial training and continuous updating provided by expert outsiders;
 - seeking to influence others by **exercising leadership** rather than simply being led.
- (Frost et al 2016: 2-3; emphases added)

The distinctiveness of its provision is the result of the following key characteristics:

- Its institutional context is an organisation that is run by teachers
 - The programme is taught entirely by practicing teachers
 - It is transformative because it is based on development rather than research
 - The teaching of the programme is based on a pedagogy for empowerment
 - It is embedded in a network
- (Frost et al 2016: 4)

Teacher leadership and development work are central concepts:

The design draws on the tradition of ‘non-positional teacher leadership’ (Frost, 2014) and ‘teacher-led development work’ (Frost & Durrant, 2003; Frost, 2013; Hill, 2014) in which it is assumed that teachers can be enabled to lead change and improvement through the medium of a well-planned, time-bounded development project.

(Frost et al 2016: 6)

Development work is defined as (op cit: 6):

strategic, focused, planned and deliberate, attempts to improve an aspect of professional practice through incremental steps largely featuring analysis, data collection, reflection and deliberation in collaborative contexts.

(Frost et al 2016: 6)

The pedagogy of the MEd (Wearing 2011: 30) reflects the approach of the network and is encapsulated in a set of pedagogic principles which are shown in Table 2.

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| 1. The cultivation of moral purpose as a dimension of extended professionalism |
| 2. Enabling the development of professional practice through the design and leadership of development projects |
| 3. Scaffolding the development of the learning community in which enhanced social capital allows critical friendship to flourish |
| 4. Enabling reflection on experience and ideas through participation in dialogic activities |
| 5. Building the capacity for critical reflection and narrative writing in which scholarship illuminates problem solving in professional contexts |
| 6. Facilitation and support through the use of discursive and conceptual tools that deepen understanding of themes relevant to the development of educational practice |
| 7. Building professional knowledge and fostering mutual inspiration through the organisation of networking and opportunities for international engagement |

Table 2: Pedagogic principles (Frost et al 2016: 7-8)

The teaching team is entirely made up of practitioners. At the time of writing (April 2016), they are: Val Hill, Assistant Headteacher at Birchwood High School (MEd Course Director and team leader), Sarah Lightfoot (Deputy team leader), Tracy Gaiteri and Clare Herbert (both primary headteachers), Jo Mylles, Sheila Ball and Paul Rose (members of senior leadership teams in other secondary schools in the region) (Frost et al 2016: 5).

Participative professionalism

Participative professionalism is evident as explicit and central features of the constitution of the MEd, as shown in the rationale discussed in the previous section. The programme is aimed at developing the kind of professionalism that involves active, ongoing agency in bringing about innovation, creating professional knowledge and exercising leadership, and undertaking this agency as a member of a professional community rather than individualistically. In this way, the master's is committed to developing a professional identity in which the practice of distributed leadership is a defining feature.

The pedagogic principles (Table 2) provide a framework that helps to promote participative professionalism. What this means for the student in the master's is given some specificity in in principles 2 (designing and leading development projects) and 4 (participation in dialogic activities). The principles inform the practice of the network and its master's programme. For example, events that MEd participants are involved in are designed so as to discourage the adoption of transmission modes of passing on knowledge and the reduction of professional learning to the sharing of 'top tips'.

What we observe in our network events is teachers telling stories about their leadership of development projects and facilitating discussion by asking the other teachers in the room for advice or comparable experiences.
(Frost et al 2016: 9)

The development of an identity as a participative professional embracing distributed leadership is part of the learning which is examined under 'Deep Learning' below. In that section, how the pedagogic principles address the socialisation and subjectification dimensions of learning (Biesta 2009) is detailed, as well as the 'universal professionalism' that is promoted by international networking (Frost et al: 10).

Deep level collaboration

As with participative professionalism, the pedagogic principles provide a framework that reinforces deep level collaboration. This is particularly evident in principle 3 (development of the programme as a learning community), the centrality of development projects (cited in principle 2) and the place of critical friendships (cited in 3) (Table 2). These crystallise the programme aim of creating a cohesive culture and a shared identity, systematically encouraging and facilitating mutual support and providing a framework for working together in creative ways. These are all features of deep level collaboration. They also describe the kind of participative culture, enabling institutional structures and an open social environment that are integral to distributed leadership in an organisation (Woods 2015, Woods and Roberts 2015).

Relevant to the depth and sustaining of collaboration is the fact that the programme is embedded in the wider network of HertsCam. This is manifested in specific ways. Wearing's (2011: 31) evaluation observes that participation 'in the MEd gives a sense of belonging to a community in which goals, standards and values are shared'. Students take part in activities such as the twilight sessions (p30) and residentials (p31). They are active members of the HertsCam network of people who come together at

HertsCam Network Events, an Annual Conference and an Annual Dinner. These events also include teachers who are enrolled on the Teacher Led Development Work (TLDW)... programme and those who have completed either the TLDW or the MEd in the past. A proportion of the required 'attendance' for the masters is taken up with participation in these events.
(Frost et al 2016: 8-9).

Events are conducted in ways which encourage collaboration that draws participants together with a sense of shared purpose - a collective sense of empowerment that is indicative of deep level collaboration. Within the communal activities of the network

we see practitioners creating and reinforcing a sense of common cause in which they offer each other challenge and support and develop shared beliefs about recurring concerns. This builds collective self-efficacy (Bangs & Frost, 2015; Bandura, 1995) which is the sense that 'people like us can do this sort of thing'.

(Frost et al 2016: 9)

This is how one student linked her membership and activities within the HertsCam community and her learning.

For me not only being part of the MEd cohort, but also working with a variety of teachers in school and leading discussion groups at the HertsCam Network events, has moved my own knowledge and practice forward considerably.

(MEd Year 2, 2011, quoted in Wearing 2011: 32)

Evaluations and feedback to HertsCam have found the community feel and activities to be positive, though there may be potential issues of inclusion that are yet to be examined, which are referred to in the next section. Limitations of interconnecting via technology have been found. In the 2011 evaluation, it was noted that 'Experiments using the 'on-line forum' and the 'chat room' have had limited use and success' (Wearing 2011: 34).

Equity

Equity does not appear explicitly in the pedagogic principles (Table 1), but it might be seen as implicit in principle 1 on moral purpose which states that the programme is taught 'on the basis of a shared understanding that improving the life chances of the young people in our schools is our central purpose' (Frost et al 2016: 6). An example reinforces this. Participants in HertsCam community activities for the MEd programme are asked at the start of their involvement to reflect on their professional concerns (p10):

... when they rehearse these with other teachers it raises questions of equity and justice. For example, a teacher leading a workshop might begin their narrative with something like: 'I was concerned that there was a group of students who seemed always to be on the margins of classroom discussion and even in small group activities seemed to be passive'. The effect is to spread the virus of moral purpose through mutual encouragement to identify and face issues which are essentially moral ones.'

The decision about what issue or problem a teacher's MEd study should address is for the teacher to make, and the right and responsibility to do this is central to the programme. Nevertheless, a critical examination of the topics and approaches to addressing equity in master's projects would be illuminating. Its results would provide evidence to inform future project decisions by teachers and might have implications for the pedagogy of the programme.

Another aspect of equity is access to and inclusion of teachers and other potential participants in the MEd programme. Some issues were indicated in the evaluation by HertsCam. As noted above, secondary school teachers are more likely to be participants; and approximately twice as many secondary as primary teachers had participated in the MEd, with very small numbers from nursery, infant and special schools (Wearing 2011: 29). In recent years, the numbers of secondary and primary teachers taking up studies has become more balanced. Data are not available to see if other factors might be associated with differences in participation, such as gender, ethnicity or subject area.

Deep learning

The MEd and TLDW programmes are intended to have learning and other impacts upon teachers (individually and collectively as a profession), school students and the community. The outcomes of master’s projects should contribute to organisational learning too, by embedding collaboration and pedagogic dialogue within the development processes of the school. In other words, the MEd is intended to act as a catalyst for change by encouraging positive changes in the enduring cultures and habits of interaction in schools. How these intended impacts are visualised by the programme is shown in Appendix 3.

Deep learning and the MEd is discussed in three sub-sections: the nature of intended learning, using Biesta’s (2009) dimensions of learning; the impact on teachers’ and school learning; and the impact on school students’ learning.

Dimensions of learning and the pedagogic principles

The pedagogic principles (Table 2) provide a framework that promotes different kinds of learning by those who take the programme. The principles can be understood in terms of Biesta’s (2009) dimensions of learning: socialisation (becoming part of a group or community, such as the teaching profession or a particular type of professionalism), subjectification (developing as a person with the ability to think critically and independently of the communities into which the person is socialised), and qualification (the knowledge, skills, understanding and judgement that enable a person to undertake a practice). Each of the pedagogic principles will lead to interpretations in practice that contribute to all three dimensions of learning. However, Table 3 suggests in which dimension each of the principles is likely to make most impact, and illustrates how the intention of the MEd is to advance learning across these dimensions.

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| 1 - developing as a professional involves understanding and appreciating its moral purpose | socialisation |
| 2 - scaffolding the development of the learning community in which enhanced social capital allows critical friendship to flourish | socialisation |
| 3 - enabling the development of professional practice through the design and leadership of development projects | qualification |
| 4 - where reflection is developed as a professional, indicating that through dialogue is how learn as a professional | socialisation |
| 5 - critical reflection, so developing independent thinking as well as being part of a community | subjectification |
| 6 - deepening understanding of themes relevant to the development of educational practice | qualification |
| 7 - building professional knowledge and fostering mutual inspiration through the organisation of networking and opportunities for international engagement | qualification |

Table 3: Pedagogic principles mapped against Biesta’s (2009) dimensions of learning

A further aspect to the impact on professional identity - i.e. an additional aspect to the socialisation dimension - is the international networking. Research, undertaken by a doctoral student at the University Cambridge

indicates that this seems to build a sense of what might be called **universal professionalism** whereby teachers come to see themselves as belonging to a wider, global professional community (Underwood, 2014).
(Frost et al: 10; our emphasis)

Teacher and school learning

An evaluation undertaken by the HertsCam Network in 2011 (Wearing 2011: 34) categorised the impact of the programme under the headings of professional development, school improvement and knowledge building, as follows:

professional development (p35)

Teachers talked about

- having more knowledge about school leadership
- being able to develop others
- having skills to plan whole school projects

Tutors also report significant impact on their own professional development.

school improvement (p35-37)

- Most projects support whole school development and the school improvement plan.
- They usually seek to have a direct impact on the quality and outcomes of students' learning
- Projects focusing on support programmes for professional learning are a popular option, e.g. looking at the impact of a TLDW group

The evaluation concludes that 'Most MEd participants projects have helped to foster a positive learning culture and improvement in attainment in their schools' (p38).

knowledge building (p37-38)

- It is common for participants to share knowledge through workshops on school training days or by presenting and discussing their work at network events. 'One teacher's project focused on early intervention strategies for pupils identified with mathematical difficulties. The strategies she adopted have now extended to other schools.' (p37)
- A data base of project titles, summaries etc. is kept centrally and is accessible online.
- A few teachers have been able to share/exchange knowledge through the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative⁵.

The learning of capabilities to work in and support the network is a part of experiencing the master's, and this learning feeds back into the continuing operation of the network.

A characteristic feature of the network is that the expertise to facilitate its activities has grown within the network itself. Tutors have typically graduated from the MEd. They often move on to support new groups in other schools.

(Wearing 2011: 16)

The way in which the MEd enables teachers to develop their learning and to have a ripple effect beyond the individual MEd student is illustrated in numerous personal and interpersonal stories that have been generated within the programme. The MEd, and other HertsCam development work, involves the construction by teachers of stories or narratives of the change they are making through their development projects. This is central to the HertsCam approach, because story construction enables the complexities, interactions, progress over time and multiple impacts to be captured, as well as the agency of teachers. One of the practitioner tutors on the MEd programme explains that MEd students are given

the structure and the support to think about those various aspects of impact and to plan for that. So it's not about 'I'm just going to do these few activities and see what will happen'. We are

⁵ The ITL initiative is case study 5 in the UK EFFeCT case studies.

encouraging them to be strategic and to be aware of all those different aspects that might be impacted and how.
(Sarah Lightfoot, focus group, 25.4.16, Rec2:18.23-18.44)

A Marie Curie Postdoctoral Research Fellow, based at the University of Cambridge, is carrying out research into the HertsCam Network. She summarises what she has observed about the use of stories and the contribution of dialogue.

In the observations and the short interviews that we did in the annual conference or with the MEd students, the stories they are sharing, it's amazing how during this kind of conversations teachers realise how others are having an influence on their own practice and it's through dialogue that these thoughts and these insights many teachers realise that they are doing things; by sharing the knowledge that they realise they are doing this but maybe they were doing this before but as the conversation is being developed and the dialogue is growing they realise that they are doing more things than they could imagine before. They mention how they could develop further practices and how the network events and the moments to share their experience could be a moment to open new horizons and to further explore more initiatives and how teachers realise that they are having this impact and this change in their own practice but also influencing and inspiring others. So the stories underpinning this process as agents of change is relevant and excellent in terms of how these conversations, teachers realise that they are leading this change together and they are sharing the experience and they could go beyond what they expected in the past when they started as teachers. And this is happening also with teachers from different positions - teachers who have been in different schools for 20 years, or may be for a year, or 5 years - but it's not depending on the time they are acting or leading change, it's how they could open more their minds to this kind of dialogue.
(Gisela Redondo-Sama, focus group, 25.4.16, Rec2:50.47-53.16)

Examples of stories are offered here through which the socialisation, subjectification and qualification dimensions of teacher learning are threaded. Stories highlighting student learning are set out in the following sub-section.

This headteacher (of a primary school) explains one impact of the MEd on learning through the way it affected the running of staff meetings:

As I progressed through the MEd course I became more excited about the links between educational theory and classroom practice and this affected my leadership approach. Sharing literature became a part of staff meetings, helping colleagues to think about and modify practice. Practical matters were relegated to a communications book. Every staff meeting became an inset [teacher development] opportunity to focus on learning and teaching.
(Tracy Gaiteri, in HertsCam 2011: 5)

An assistant headteacher in a secondary school explains 'how doing the MEd had enabled him to 'talk in a more convincing way' about his strategies for leading teaching and learning which has in turn supported so much change and improvement being led by his colleagues' (Paul Rose, in HertsCam 2011: 6). Starting with the MEd, this led to advising the school's headteacher to begin the TLDW programme in the school. By 2011, the school's TLDW programme had enabled over 50 teachers to undertake classroom experimentation and lead innovation. It helped teachers and non-teaching staff 'to develop the language and inclination to raise questions about practice and to embrace new ideas from whatever source', and gave staff 'a framework to pursue their own interests' and make visible 'what teachers have to offer in terms of their engagement with innovation' often leading to promotion and career development (Paul Rose, in HertsCam 2011: 5).

A senior leader beginning the MEd was similarly an important catalyst for change at another secondary school (Chris Ingate, in HertsCam 2011: 6). He sees this as leading to the situation where we 'now have a school where dialogue about teaching and learning is the norm and teachers see it as part of their professional role to lead changes in practice that lead to improved student outcomes' (op cit: 7).

In another school, by 2011 19 members of staff had taken the MEd with identifiable benefits (Paul Barnett, in HertsCam 2011: 7-8). Asked in 2011 how participation in the MEd had helped members of staff to be more influential and effective in their professional roles, the deputy headteacher explained that doing the MEd

had enabled them to develop their intellectual edge and to have confidence in their ideas and leadership practice. Almost all of the projects undertaken had focused on aspects of teaching: for example, assessment for learning, raising girls' self-esteem, coping with the emotional challenge of teaching, learning preference profiling, careers education, developing thinking skills and so on. All of these had contributed to tangible improvements in classroom practice and pupil learning. (p8)

The assessment by the University of Hertfordshire of the programme involved interviewing??? past MEd students. The university panel commended the programme as 'visionary' in its 'aims to inspire teachers to engage in the moral purpose of education' and as being characterised by 'an articulate student body who are a testament to the transformative and empowering nature of the programme' (Academic Services 2015).

Student learning

A variety of aspects of student learning is addressed by the MEd and development work in the network.

The development work undertaken by teachers within the HertsCam Network usually seeks to have a direct impact on the quality and outcomes of students' learning. This may be directly focused on attainment for example by focusing how to enable students to understand a particular concept in Physics or to become more adept at solving mathematical problems; it may equally be a matter of developing strategies to enable students to learn about how to become better learners or to enable them to develop a more positive attitude to school and learning in general.

(HertsCam 2011: 9)

The importance of giving accounts of change as stories or narratives was highlighted above. One of the practitioner tutors on the MEd programme explains:

...all of these stories are putting flesh on the facts and figures that teachers are required to provide in school through their assessment procedures. And I think that one thing I know from lots of conversations with headteachers is that those stories are what impress their Ofsted visitors [national school inspectors] - that they can provide the facts and figures but they say, but this is the work that goes behind that change. This group of under-achieving children who've suddenly made this progress, this is the reason why. It provides that human quality, I think, to those facts and figures.

(Sarah Lightfoot, focus group, 25.4.16, Rec2: 16.17-17.00)

Some brief accounts of examples are given below, covering in turn the following topics: reversing disaffection (HertsCam 2011: 9); developing creativity in the classroom (p11); developing new learning processes and impacting upon the whole school's development (p12); engaging with parents illustrating how impact can extend to the community (p13); and early intervention strategies on maths illustrating building professional knowledge across schools (p14).

Sophie Brace was an Advanced Skills Teacher at Barnwell School, Stevenage when she joined the HertsCam MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning. She was keenly aware that for some boys their disaffection was a severe barrier to learning, particularly within Science. This problem became the focus of Sophie's MEd project which she began by identifying the worst cases of underachievement. The boys in her target group seemed completely negative about their learning and behaved badly as a consequence. Sophie experimented with strategies including a 'personalised learning' approach and 'group mentoring'. The project had a significant impact on

the target group of students but perhaps more important was the impact on colleagues in other subject areas. Sophie approached colleagues and invited them to participate in a discussion group which led to a mutual observation arrangement focusing on ways to improve relationships with disaffected students. This project has had a positive ripple effect throughout the school.

Andrew Whiteway was a teacher of English at The Barclay School, Stevenage when he joined the TLDW programme. His first development project focused on creative approaches to teaching poetry in which he drew his colleagues into discussions aimed at a review of strategies using visual and musical resources to stimulate students' imaginations. He gathered feedback from students in order to evaluate these new strategies. Andrew then joined the HertsCam MEd and his next project focused on developing the use of innovative multi-media. Again he drew his colleagues into a process of collaboration and extended the dialogue beyond the school through blogging and the use of twitter.

Heather Mollinson is Head of Science at Birchwood High School. She joined the TLDW group at her school and her project helped the department to develop exam revision techniques for students. She then joined the MEd and co-led the introduction of the Building Learning Power approach. This involved training 20 colleagues in the use of these techniques for developing students' learning capacity. The study helped Heather to develop her own confidence and leadership capacity. The project made a substantial contribution to whole school development.

Mark Kingston participated in the HertsCam MEd. His development project focused on improving the school's relationship with parents. A first practical step was to rent a room in the local community centre and invite parents to join him and colleagues – the Headteacher and the extended schools' team for coffee one Friday morning. In an informal setting parents were invited to make comments about school life generally. Their comments tended to be about contact, information sharing and wanting to feel part of their children's education. They were very enthusiastic about a bi monthly opportunity to meet with the Head, as well as monthly evening or early morning surgeries. They also explored building bonds with parents through a range of activities including joint charitable ventures and teacher and staff days out. One good idea that emerged from this was an event to celebrate the completion of Year 7. The focus on the parents of Year 7 would build a new culture and relationships from the bottom up.

Maria's project at Lawrence Haines SpLD Base in Watford has been very influential in the County. Her MEd project focused on early intervention strategies for pupils identified with mathematical difficulties to stop them developing negative attitudes towards mathematics. Her school now has strategies and systems in place to support pupils with significant mathematical difficulties and the 'ripple' effect has extended to other schools through discussion with colleagues who have used the school's project as a starting point for reflection on their own practice. One of the ways Maria shared her development work was through a network event held at a primary school in St Albans.

A further example is written up by a teacher (now a headteacher) as a book chapter (Rawlings 2014). Her MEd project concerned the use of 'talk for learning', with the aim of developing a 'dialogic' approach that would become part of the teaching and learning repertoire in our classrooms' (p63). Reflecting the HertsCam way of working collaboratively with colleagues, she set up a 'Talk for Learning Development Group' with three other teachers. The project followed the following stages: experimenting with practice, gathering and using evidence, and collaborating to manage change. The experience of one of the teachers (Claire) in the group illustrates how the project enabled both pupil and professional learning. Eight weeks into the project, lesson observations were made and a lesson by Claire was video recorded:

On the recording it was interesting to hear pupils building on each other's ideas, clarifying what had been said and making the decisions. Claire and I transcribed these discussions to gain an insight into the nature of the pupils' dialogue. We saw evidence of pupils asking each other

questions, being constructively critical and giving reasons for opinions. Some pupils clearly enjoyed using the dictaphones and were keen to 'show off' what they knew. Following the lesson and reflection on the recording, Claire made the following entry in her log.

*It was fascinating going around the groups and listening to them discussing the task. They all seemed to take the task seriously and made a good effort to talk about the issue involved. Some children who don't contribute much to whole class discussion were much happier volunteering their views in smaller groups. Some who struggle more with their written explanations did well with their verbal contribution.
(Claire, TLD, 9 November)*

Following the observation, Claire continued to use strategies and tools such as the dictaphones to encourage dialogue within the classroom. Therefore the collaborative approach in a supportive environment was enabling Claire to develop a more dialogically orientated classroom community... Claire was certainly beginning to lead developments within her classroom and share success with colleagues. (Rawlings 2014: 69)

Facilitating factors

A key contextual factor that promoted the HertsCam MEd and the distinctive form it takes is the partnership from which it emerged. That is, it was the product of a university (the University of Cambridge) that had established an active network with schools, school leaders and teachers with a commitment to leadership for learning, and a relationship with a local authority (Hertfordshire County Council). Involved in the origins of the MEd were academics who were committed to creating a different kind of MEd for teachers that put into practice a pedagogy and approach to research that was based on an active professional agency. Crucial too was the leadership given to the early and later development of the MEd by a university academic (Dr David Frost) who could formulate a sustained framework and distinctive intention for the masters and communicate this to others.

A capacity for flexibility in response to changing circumstances and for learning and adapting was a crucial factor. Over time the HertsCam partnership underpinning the MEd changed in response to the pressures on both the local authority, with funding being diverted directly to schools, and the University of Cambridge, with the impact of the University's aspirations as an intensive research institution. The MEd was able both to review and develop itself as a programme run by the HertsCam Network and to find a new academic institution (the University of Hertfordshire) to validate and award the degrees. The availability of an external institution open to the spirit and way of working of the MEd and possessing the academic capital to provide appropriate scrutiny and award legitimacy is an essential factor in understanding how the MEd has been able to develop and be sustained.

Other important facilitating factors include the larger framework of the HertsCam Network in which the MEd sits. For example, the practice and pedagogical principles of HertsCam are embedded in its whole approach - to activities such as the TLDW and network events. The commitment and energy of the teachers and other participants in the programme are key factors too, as is the openness of school leaders to incorporate and support teachers in taking the masters.

Barriers

Some of the changes to which the MEd programme has had to respond, referred to in the previous section, can be seen as barriers that needed to be overcome. The changing priorities of the University of Cambridge, for example, led to fees being raised and an insistence by the university that it was not legitimate for practitioners to teach on the masters. This led to the decision by the HertsCam Network to end the relationship with that university and to seek another academic partner, which was a challenge.

Teachers' fees for the MEd have been mostly met by schools in recent years and it is recognised that the programme is dependent on schools continuing to be able to do so.

Conclusion

The HertsCam MEd is a distinctive programme that enables teachers and others to develop an active participative professionalism in which educators from any part of the conventional school hierarchy can initiate and lead change collaboratively. It promotes in a practical way non-positional distributed leadership. The programme has led to hundreds of projects created and led by teachers that have and are making a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Since 2015, the MEd has been run and taught by practitioners. Its teacher-led character is therefore threaded through its entire operation.

It might be beneficial for the programme to examine some specific questions about equity. For example, whilst issues of equity are addressed in MEd projects, it could be useful to carry out a systematic examination of the ways that master's projects address equity in school pupils' learning in order to identify any patterns and gaps. Another aspect concerns patterns of access to and participation in the programme. Secondary school teachers historically have been more likely to be participants, though the participation of secondary and primary teachers is more evenly balanced now. Data are not available to see if other factors might be associated with differences in participation, such as gender, ethnicity or subject area.

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Appendix 1: An Introduction to the HertsCam Network

The HertsCam Network⁶ is a network of teachers and schools which supports teachers in leading innovation in their own schools and in building knowledge about teaching and learning across schools. Support at the network and school levels (through school-based support groups, for example) enables teachers to lead collaborative development projects that improve the quality of teaching and learning. It has resulted in over 700 teachers in 40 schools developing the capacity to lead school improvement through school-based enquiries.

The conceptualisation of teacher leadership underpinning its work recognises the potential of all teachers to exercise leadership as part of their role as a teacher. The network aims to enable teachers, and others contributing to education in schools, to develop an identity as educators in which they confidently see themselves as agents of change - bringing about innovation, creating professional knowledge, exercising leadership and undertaking this agency as a member of a collaborative community. In this way, it is committed to developing an identity as educators in which the practice of inclusive distributed leadership is a defining feature.

The network serves the county of Hertfordshire, though there are some participants in the network from neighbouring counties. It was initiated in 1998 when Hertfordshire County Council proposed a partnership with the University of Cambridge to support schools in the region. The network has evolved to become an independent organisation, and since 2013 has been a charitable organisation governed by directors, trustees and an advisory steering committee representing network participants. Formal links with the University of Cambridge were drawn to a close and a new academic partner sought (which led to the current partnership with the University of Hertfordshire).

Its core activities are

- **Teacher Led Development Work (TLDW) programme.** This supports teacher leadership in primary, secondary and special schools by enabling teachers and other educational practitioners to plan and lead projects designed to develop the quality and effectiveness of aspects of teaching and learning in their own schools. It involves in any one year approximately 100 teachers and 100 projects, with 25 tutors and 14 school-based groups. Successful completion leads to an award of the HertsCam Certificate in Teacher Leadership, which can be used to achieve credit within other academic programmes.
- **MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning.** This is run and taught entirely by teachers in the network. It is as a 2-year, part-time programme which enables teachers to plan and lead a development project that makes a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in their school or other setting and to base this project in a critical appreciation of relevant literature, concepts and domains of knowledge. Average recruitment is 20 per year, with 215 teachers graduating between 1999 and 2013. In 2015, the University of Hertfordshire re-validated the MEd and since then has awarded the master degrees.
- **Network events.** There is a programme of six per year, hosted by schools. Typically between 50 and 150 teachers and other practitioners take part in poster displays and workshop sessions.
- **Annual Conference.** This is part of the yearly networking cycle and is its highpoint.

⁶ The HertsCam website is at <http://www.hertscam.org.uk>

Appendix 2: MEd Annual Recruitment Figures and Graduation Rates

Source: HertsCam Network (2013)

| Cohort | Recruits | With draws | Deferments | Fails | Graduates | % success rate | Comment |
|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-------|-----------|----------------|--|
| 1999-2001 | 19 | 3 | - | - | 16 | 84 | First cohort had a large teaching team (Hargreaves, James, Connor, Fielding + Frost subsequently) |
| 2000-02 | 21 | 10 | - | - | 11 | 52 | During this year the team that started the MEd team quit leaving David Frost coordinating with some teaching from Connor |
| 2001-03 | 18 | 4 | - | - | 14 | 78 | |
| 2002-04 | 20 | 1 | - | 1 | 18 | 90 | |
| 2003-05 | 24 | 7 | - | 1 | 16 | 67 | |
| 2004-06 | 21 | 5 | - | - | 16 | 76 | |
| 2005-07 | 19 | 3 | 3 | - | 13 | 68 | |
| 2006-08 | 18 | 2 | 1 | - | 17 | 94 | |
| 2007-09 | 15 | 6 | 1 | | 16 | 106 | The graduates included a returnee from an intermission |
| 2008-10 | 19 | | 2 | - | 20 | 105 | The graduates included a returnee from an intermission |
| 2009-11 | 21 | 1 | 1 | - | 21 | 100 | The graduates included 2 returnees from an intermission |
| 2010-12 | 20 | - | 1 | - | 19 | 95 | |
| 2011-13 | 18 | 1 | - | - | 18 | 100 | The graduates included a returnee from an intermission |
| 2012-14 | 11 | - | 1 | - | | | |
| 2013-15 | 14 | | | | | | |

Appendix 3: Impact sought by the MEd and TLDW programme

Source: HertsCam Network (2011: 2)

