

<b>Institution:</b> University of Stirling		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23. Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Connecting policy and practice: Enhancing Professional Learning through 'Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry'.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008 - 2017		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Valerie Drew	Senior Lecturer	08/2008 - present
Cate Watson	Professor	08/2009 - present
Maureen K. Michael	Lecturer	05/2015 - present
	Research Assistant	11/2012 - 06/2014
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2012 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>The 'Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry' (CCPE) model has changed teachers' professional learning and leadership practices. This change has been brought about as a result of teachers engaging with CCPE; and through the model's impact on education policies in Scotland and Wales. Teachers are now empowered at all career stages to take the lead in determining their professional learning. Developed at the University of Stirling, the CCPE model is delivered in partnership with local authorities via bespoke programmes of professional learning. The ICS presents evidence of enhanced professional learning and leadership which is required to secure school improvement for better learning experiences and outcomes for learners.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Education policies in the United Kingdom have promoted teacher professional learning as a means to school improvement. These policies emphasise: teacher autonomy and their role as agents of change; and new forms of partnership working between universities, schools and local authorities. But policy purpose is not always realised in practice. Our research has responded with new conceptualisations of professional learning [R1-6] that aim to bridge this policy/practice divide in professional learning. Early research established the model, then called Collaborative Professional Enquiry (CPE), which led to changes in teacher practices. Subsequent research has refined the model and it has increasingly influenced policy in Scotland and Wales. The research was undertaken at the University of Stirling and funded by governments/local authorities in Scotland and Wales (total combined funding of GBP453,753). Key researchers are the case-study authors Drew, Watson, Michael in collaboration with others (see References).</p> <p>The foundational research [partly reported in R1] examined the professional learning of advanced practitioners during periods of policy change. It highlighted the necessity for collaborative action between teachers when undertaking school improvement activities. Our findings led to the earliest iteration of the model, termed 'Collaborative Professional Enquiry' (CPE). The 'Collaborative' dimension distinguished our model from others that focused on individual teacher competence rather than collaboration among teachers. The initial research theorised the model as teacher engagement with three phases: planning, interrupting and sense-making. R1, emphasises that all three phases involve working <i>with</i> other teachers and school leaders, and often parents, pupils, local authority staff and external agencies, with the shared aim of school improvement.</p> <p>In the next phase of our research, we examined the policy framework within which advanced practitioners in Scotland were working. This led to the identification of two essential aspects of successful advanced professional learning and consequently school improvements: the development of teacher leadership; and the active involvement of school leaders in supporting those engaged in professional learning [R2].</p> <p>We also explored the effectiveness of using the CPE model for curriculum development. It was found that teachers' critical engagement with academic literature and research, and external agencies, was essential in creating an 'interruption' to existing, often habitual practices through critical reflection [R3]. This foregrounding of criticality changed the designation of the model to</p>		

*Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry (CCPE)*. **R3** is one of the 50 'most impactful journal articles published by Emerald over the last half century' (January 2017 <http://www.emerald.com/impact/2010/#years>).

In a crucial next stage of the research we found the involvement of a more knowledgeable colleague, termed a 'critical colleague' to be a key aspect of the model [**R4**]. The research team at this point included experienced members of staff from our local authority partnership and was pivotal in foregrounding the co-production that underpins the critical and collaborative capacity-building of CCPE.

**R5** examined the language and discourses of teacher development showing how 'professional learning' has replaced the more instrumental term 'CPD' (Continuing Professional Development) in policy. This informed the understanding of effective pedagogies for professional learning, leading to refinements of the model.

**R6** explored the pedagogy of criticality and how it can be developed at an advanced level (i.e. Masters-level). This research linked specifically with Scottish policy ambition for teaching as a Master's profession in Scotland. In **R6** we found that practitioners enhance their criticality through collaborative and mutual support (rather than direct challenge). This insight informed the development of collaborative pedagogy in CCPE, and is now embedded in the bespoke programmes we developed for our partnership work with Scottish and Welsh national governments.

### 3. References to the research

- R1.** Drew, V., Fox, A. & McBride, M. (2008). Collaborating to improve learning and teaching. In: Reeves J, Fox A (ed.). *Practice Based Learning: Developing Excellence in Teaching. Policy & Practice in Education*, 24, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press Ltd, 52-66.
- R2.** Reeves, J., & Drew, V. (2012). Relays and relations: tracking a policy initiative for improving teacher professionalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(6), 711-730. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2011.652194>
- R3.** Drew, V., Priestley, M., & Michael, M.K. (2016). Curriculum development through critical collaborative professional enquiry. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(1), 92-106. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-09-2015-0006>
- R4.** Watson, C. and Drew, V. (2017). Enacting educational partnership: collective identity, decision-making (and the importance of muffin chat). *School Leadership and Management* 37(1-2), 3-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2016.1209181>
- R5.** Watson, C. and Michael, M.K.(2016). Translations of policy and shifting demands of teacher professionalism: From CPD to professional learning. *Journal of Education policy*, 31(3), pp.259-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2015.1092053>
- R6.** Watson, C., Wilson, A., Drew, V. and Thompson, T.L. (2016) Criticality and the exercise of politeness in online spaces for professional learning. *Internet and Higher Education* 31 (2016) 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2016.06.002>

### 4. Details of the impact

Our impact has changed policy and practice around professional learning by effectively bridging the policy/practice divide, resulting in the empowerment of teachers across Scotland and Wales. As practices changed in schools, policy-makers took note of the subsequent system-wide improvements, and incorporated CCPE into education policy in Scotland and Wales, thus extending the significance and reach of the CCPE model and its underpinning research.

#### Shaping National Education Policies for Teacher Professional Learning

The CCPE model of professional learning has directly influenced education policy in Scotland and Wales. This was through our work with Education Scotland, the executive agency responsible for quality and improvement in education in Scotland which implements policy for all 51,000 teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools in Scotland; and the Welsh Government implementing policy for all 26,800 teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools in Wales.

#### Shaping Education Policy in Scotland

CCPE has underpinned Scottish policy regarding headship qualifications. Gayle Gorman the Chief Executive of Education Scotland and HM Chief Inspector of Education, explained the importance

of the model to the recently devised mandatory headship qualifications: 'The comprehensive suite of programmes in place have been influenced both directly and indirectly by the CCPE model ... Dr Drew has contributed to the development and delivery of the suite of programmes including headship preparation and in headship programmes (Into Headship, In Headship, Excellence in Headship and Fellowship) and the Teacher Leadership programme' [S1a]. (Nb. also see Stirling's submitted case study REF3.UoS.C23.2 where the impact of the Excellence in Headship programme on curriculum making is the focus. In this case study the focus is the impact on professional learning). She also drew attention to the specific research [exemplified by R3] that has influenced an aspect of professional learning policy for headteachers: 'Research by Watson and Drew (2017) identified the role of a critical colleague in supporting practice-based Masters-level learning. From this research a specification was produced to define the role of a critical colleague which is now an integral part of the In Headship programme' [S1a]. A Scottish Government representative noted that the CCPE model provided an '[Testimonial redacted from publication at request of testimonial provider]' [S1b].

Further, Drew has made a significant contribution to the development of the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) 'Professional Standards 2021 for Scotland's Teachers' through the influence of her research in CCPE as a member of the GTCS Revision of Professional Standards Working Group (2017-2019) and GTCS Writing Group (2019-2020) for [The Standard for Middle Leadership](#) and [The Standard for Headship](#). Developing criticality and promoting collaboration are now stated in the overarching statements for all five Professional Skills and Abilities (Section 3), and a requirement to 'develop and engage in professional enquiry as a key element of a sustainable professional learning culture' is now embedded in these two leadership Standards.

### Shaping Education Policy in Wales

The Welsh Government adopted CCPE as their model of professional learning in 2019 for the 26,800 teachers in Wales when developing the new '*Curriculum of Wales*'. This signifies reach. The Deputy Director of Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Development for the Welsh Government, Dr Kevin Palmer, underlined the significance of CCPE in the 'National Approach to Professional Learning' stating that 'The CCPE model has been a key aspect of policy development in relation to Professional Learning' [S2]. Further, reporting to the Welsh Assembly, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, explained 'We are in the phase of the programme now where, through Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry (CCPE) led by pioneers supported by higher education partners, we are drawing out the needs of practitioners, to ensure that [the] professional learning offer in the regions is responsive to emerging requirements' [S4].

### Embedding empowerment into Professional Learning Practices

Crucially, through engagement with the CCPE model, teachers in Scotland (from 2013) and Wales (from 2016) at all career stages are now engaging in transformational change by **taking the lead** in their professional learning; and they are doing this **critically** and **collaboratively**.

CCPE and its research is delivered by University of Stirling through three distinctive pathways:

- Bespoke professional learning programmes (commissioned by Education Scotland, regional consortia in Scotland (Forth Valley and West Lothian, West Partnership) and Wales (EAS SE Wales), and individual local education authorities in Scotland (i.e. East Lothian, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire & West Lothian)
- University-led Scottish National programme for Into Headship (mandatory) / In Headship
- University-led work-based Postgraduate Taught Master's Programmes

In total, around 1000 teachers/school leaders across Scotland and Wales have engaged directly through these pathways with CCPE and its underpinning research, indicative of the reach of CCPE.

Dr Elaine Cook, Depute Chief Executive West Lothian Council stated in November 2020, 'The impact of the programme has been measurable in the quality of high level discussion, planning and review between schools in West Lothian particularly in developing our collaborative curriculum networks. These have been instrumental in leading curriculum development, pedagogy and assessment in this agile and changing environment' [S10]. This led to Drew's invitation to be a member of Forth Valley & West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative Programme Board.

As a headteacher explained: '[Testimonial redacted from publication at request of testimonial provider]' [S5a, 5b & S5c]. This award represents recognition by the professional regulatory and standards body, the GTCS, and evidences positive changes in professional learning practices across a school. Other Headteachers also identified the significant impact of CCPE on professional learning in their schools and its role in receiving this prestigious GTCS Award in 2017 [S5d] and 2019 [S5e] with one Headteacher also noting that CCPE model was highlighted as a strength in their HMIE Inspection Report (Education Scotland 2020) [S5e].

These award-winning changes relate to the specific dimensions of Criticality, Collaboration and Leadership fostered through the three phases of CCPE and adopted by the relevant educational authorities of Scotland and Wales:

### **Criticality**

Critical, evidence-informed approaches to professional learning are now embedded into ways of addressing school improvement in a quarter of the local authorities in Scotland and Wales.

Teachers using the model are required to engage critically with the research literature through each of the three phases to challenge their practice in order to identify and sustain school improvement. A headteacher from Falkirk Council explained this change: 'members of staff involved were invested in the discussions with colleagues and, as the weeks progressed, the questions appeared to change from being closed questions about the logistics of the interruption, to more challenging and open ended questions about the emerging trends and the impact of our enquiry on pupils and staff, as well as a critical reflection of our practice before the interruption to the practice which we were enacting' [S7b]. This evidence of leadership change towards critical professional learning was also noted by the Chief Executive of Education Scotland who noted that where aspiring leaders had engaged with CCPE, 'the schools involved showed clear evidence of greater reflection and depth of thinking with regard to decision making and changes to policy and practice in the school' [S1a]. James Kent, Asst. Director, Professional Learning (Curriculum, Collaboration & Research), Education Achievement Action Service for SE Wales noted that 'The CCPE model is a powerful one for our Pioneer Schools since it provides a framework for critical engagement with policy (in this case Successful Futures and pioneers' ongoing AoLE work), with access to research, readings and reflection tasks. Crucially, however, it also provides a clear practical focus to their 'interruption of practice', when some of the changes that are being suggested by policy-makers can be enacted at a classroom level and effectively evaluated to establish impact [S3].

This change towards criticality is evident at all levels. A classroom teacher explained that their professional learning created: 'an increase in confidence to challenge practice imposed from above - confidence to present evidence that might be contrary to more senior leaders within school. Confidence to suggest alternative ways of thinking was a key outcome of engaging with CCPE' [S6]. This empowerment demonstrates that teacher decision-making for school improvement is now based on a range of evidence that includes academic and research literature as well as practitioner experience and expertise.

### **Collaboration**

Collaborative strategies are now embedded in a quarter of the local authorities in Scotland and Wales as a way of addressing school improvement. CCPE requires a group of teachers (across a range of remits/seniorities) to work together. This increases the likelihood that improvements will be sustained from one school year/staff cohort to the next. A headteacher of a primary school in East Lothian Council stated that: 'The collaboration from across different parts of the school, was new and exciting, breaking previously established lines of dialogue within year groups. The CCPE group were keen to meet to share new insights and reflect on these with other colleagues' [S7a]. Thus, for this school, CCPE was embedded in the School Improvement Plan, demonstrating that CCPE is a way in which schools now work as a collective to take forward their professional learning needs.

In Wales, a school leader participant on the CCPE programme 2018-2019 stated: 'Our school has become much more of a learning organisation due to the project. Training/professional learning has been research-based disseminated and shared between over 50 colleagues including the Senior Leadership Team, curriculum teams and teaching assistants. Through this, staff have greater understanding of the rationale and purpose for change... and feel they have more of a

voice' [S6]. The evidence for collaboration demonstrates the interrelationship with criticality and points to the improvements in leadership practices.

### **Leadership**

As a result of wider collaborative participation in addressing school improvement, the capacity for school leadership has increased in two ways: in the development of teachers' leadership capacity; and in the active involvement of school leaders in supporting others engaged in professional learning. A spokesperson for the Scottish Government stated: 'The CCPE model has strongly influenced the design and implementation of Education Scotland's Teacher Leadership Programme... Over 400 [now ~700, 2019/2020] teachers in Scotland have participated in the programme to date' [S9]. The impact of CCPE on teachers and school leaders has been described by one headteacher as 'a profound learning experience' that had the effect of 'empowering staff to work creatively to shape learning, teaching and assessment' [S7b].

The innovative Critical Colleague concept is an integral component of CCPE [derived from R3] and has been adopted in Scotland's national postgraduate programme (In Headship) for new headteachers in Scotland. A headteacher explained that the Critical Colleague aspect of the CCPE approach created time and space 'to evaluate my current practice through a different lens and prompted me to reconsider my approach to empowering others' [S8]. They stated they now deliberately seek the views of other stakeholders when planning, implementing and evaluating change and improvement. The combination of engaging with CCPE and the Critical Colleague changed ways in which they went about their own learning, facilitated the professional learning of others, and enrolled external collaborators into the process – a process which has school improvement at its heart, which ultimately is concerned with securing better learning experiences and outcomes for learners.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- S1 a.** Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive, Education Scotland and HMI Chief Inspector of Education (Testimonial).  
**b.** Scottish Government Testimonial [details redacted from publication at request of testimonial provider].
- S2.** Dr Kevin Palmer, Deputy Director, Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Development in The Welsh Government (Testimonial).
- S3.** James Kent, Assistant Director, Professional Learning (Curriculum, Collaboration and Research), Education Achievement Service for South East Wales (Blog).
- S4.** Williams, K. (2018) Paper 1: Developing the New Curriculum for Wales. *Minutes of Children, Young People and Education Committee*, 10 January 2019, National Assembly for Wales. (Committee Paper).
- S5 a.** Headteacher Testimonial [details redacted from publication at request of testimonial provider].  
**b.** The General Teaching Council for Scotland (2019) Excellence in Professional Learning Award for Schools and Learning Communities – Alloa Academy (2019) (Professional Recognition).  
**c.** Internal Report: Alloa Academy (2019) *GTCS Excellence in Professional Learning*.  
**d.** Dianne MacKenzie, Headteacher, Windygoul PS, East Lothian Council (Testimonial).  
**e.** Lauren Rodger, Headteacher, North Berwick HS, East Lothian Council (Testimonial).
- S6.** Drew, V.M., Priestley, M. and Peace-Hughes, T. (2020) School Based Curriculum Making through Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry, Programme Evaluation undertaken for EAS SE Wales, 2018-2019 (Evaluation Report).
- S7 a.** Sheila Laing, Headteacher (2011-18), Prestonpans Infant School, East Lothian Council (Testimonial).  
**b.** Colin Meikle, Acting Rector, Larbert High School, Falkirk Council (Testimonial).
- S8.** Nicola Devine, Headteacher, St Columba's High School, Inverclyde Council (Testimonial).
- S9.** Scottish Government Testimonial 2 [details redacted from publication at request of testimonial provider].
- S10.** Elaine Cook, Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services), West Lothian Council (Testimonial).