

<b>Institution:</b> University of Hertfordshire		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 25 – Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> The development of democratic and collaborative leadership cultures within schools and education systems		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010 – 2020		
<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>
Philip Woods	Professor of Educational Policy, Democracy and Leadership	2010 – present
Amanda Roberts	Principal Lecturer in Leadership and Professional Development	2009 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2013 – 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Research at the University of Hertfordshire (UH) has presented an alternative vision for effective school leadership, away from persistent ideas of strong hierarchies and ‘great leaders’ towards a democratic leadership culture that is fundamental to school improvement and the ability of every teacher and student to fulfil their full potential. Frameworks for embedding collaborative leadership in policy and practice have been translated, via policymaker and practitioner-facing networks and action-planning workshops, into practical resources that have built capacity for the development of democratic leadership within schools and education systems. The research has influenced school leadership policy and practice at a European level; supported the professional development of new and existing teacher leaders internationally; and strengthened the collaborative leadership skills of school leaders, including students, in the United States.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Education systems around the world have undergone significant systemic change over the last decade. In the UK local democratic accountability of schools has reduced, and new actors have entered the state system to sponsor and govern schools. The involvement of more plural and diverse providers has the potential to increase innovation and local responsiveness, but there are questions over whether this reshaped system can ensure the development of consistently high-quality leadership skills. While greater autonomy works well for some, others find themselves more constrained and less able to find or create opportunities to develop their leadership practice.</p> <p>Research led by Woods within UH’s Centre for Educational Leadership has explored ways to transform educational leadership from a top-down, hierarchical approach to a collaborative, democratic process. In 2011, Woods published his book <i>Transforming Education Policy: Shaping a democratic future</i> [3.1] in which he argued that the ‘tectonic plates’ of society were moving in the direction of democratic relationships, presenting an opportunity for progressive change within education. Potential for a transformation of educational leadership was placed in the context of wider organisational trends towards greater democratic participation. Woods applied the concept of ‘holistic democracy’ to education, arguing that it could enable schools to become more flexible, innovative and effective at creating an ethical culture that respects the needs and rights of school leaders, teachers and students. He introduced the Degrees of Democracy Framework (DoDF), a tool for collaborative professional development that enabled school communities to reflect together on where they were as a school and where they would like to be [3.2]. The Framework was based on an analysis of research data from three contrasting schools: a democratic school, a Steinerian school and an inner-city academy. Study participants were asked to consider different aspects of a school (e.g. authority structure, spaces for participation, mindset) and reflect on where the school sat on a sliding scale between performative hierarchy and holistic democracy.</p>		

The EU-funded European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL) [G1], comprising 14 universities, 13 capacity-building organisations and 14 government ministries, aimed to strengthen the professional development of school leaders in Europe. Woods analysed the dynamics of power and authority in relation to the practice of distributed leadership. He argued that distributed leadership within a school is characterised by multiple authorities constructed through interactions between people. Rather than a uniform hierarchy of formal authority, organisational members may be 'high' in some authorities and 'low' in others, and people's positioning in relation to these authorities is dynamic and changeable. Everyone is involved in the ongoing production of 'authority' by contributing to who is accepted as, or excluded from, exercising leadership [3.3]. Woods and Roberts carried out a study within a UK secondary school, which had a distributed leadership culture, to investigate the relationship between distributed leadership and social justice and democratic values. The study revealed how support staff felt that leadership opportunities were limited by their general lack of educational qualifications. Some staff and students felt opportunities to lead change were limited by restricted links with senior staff and governors, which constrained their influence over allocation of resources and decision making [3.4].

The EU-funded EFFECT project [G2], involving six partner institutions, sought to provide teachers with more effective collaborative learning opportunities within and across schools. Woods and Roberts explored how distributed leadership could be developed to be collaborative and democratic. They defined collaborative leadership as leadership that is enacted by everyone in the school and that works for inclusive participation and holistic learning [3.5]. It involved:

- An awareness that leadership is a distributed process;
- A willingness to create conditions for teachers, staff and students to develop as confident, proactive leaders of change, knowing that leadership is not the preserve of senior leaders;
- A commitment to demonstrating an explicit value base, fostering collaborative practice and personal growth in a climate that promotes mutual respect, critical dialogue, independent thinking and a sense of belonging [3.5, 3.6].

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**3.1** Woods, P. A. (2011). *Transforming Education Policy: Shaping a democratic future*. Bristol: Policy Press.

**3.2** Woods, P. A. & Woods, G. J. (2012) Degrees of School Democracy: A holistic framework, *Journal of School Leadership*, 22 (4): 707-732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461202200402>

**3.3** Woods, P. A. (2016) Authority, Power and Distributed Leadership, *Management in Education*, 30(4): 155-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020616665779>

**3.4** Woods, P. A. & Roberts, A. (2016) Distributed Leadership and Social Justice: Images and meanings from different positions across the school landscape, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 19 (2): 138-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2015.1034185>

**3.5** Woods, P. A. & Roberts, A. (2018) *Collaborative School Leadership: A Critical Guide*, London: SAGE.

**3.6** Woods, P. A. & Roberts, A. (2019) Collaborative School Leadership in a Global Society: A critical perspective', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(5): 663-677. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218759088>

#### Key underpinning grants

**G1** European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL), European Commission (Education & Training - Lifelong Learning Programme), 2011-14. €2.60m. (£31,327 to UH)

**G2** European Methodological Framework for Facilitating Collaborative Learning for Teachers (EFFeCT), European Commission (Erasmus+), 2015-2018. €0.67m. (£58,850 to UH)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Through direct interactions with policymakers and professional development workshops involving school leaders, teachers and students, the body of research described above has built

capacity for the development of collaborative and democratic leadership cultures within schools and education systems in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, the United States and, indirectly, in Malaysia, Egypt and Kazakhstan.

### **Influencing school leadership policy and practice through European collaborative networks**

EPNoSL [G1], involving government education ministries from 14 countries, was designed to generate knowledge and a discourse about school leadership across Europe. Building on his Degrees of Democracy Framework (DoDF) [3.1, 3.2], Woods developed the concept of Distributed Leadership for Learning and Equity (DLE). This was defined as leadership that is enacted by everyone in a school, not just headteachers, and promotes inclusive, holistic learning, where all are empowered and trusted to innovate and work as co-leaders. Collaborating with EPNoSL partners, Woods co-created a practical toolset for developing DLE, published on the schoolleadership.eu website in 2015, to help policymakers and practitioners develop and implement policy that supports DLE in schools [5.1]. The School Leadership Toolkit for Equity and Learning empowered school leaders and policymakers to identify opportunities for reforms or new strategic initiatives that could create school conditions in which all children, without exclusions, learn and develop to the best of their abilities. Woods and Roberts used Videoscribe whiteboard animations to explain the DLE framework, attracting more than 30,000 views across four YouTube videos [5.2].

As an indication of how policymakers acted on the EPNoSL project resources, the head of the education department for the City Government of Tartu, Estonia highlighted the school leadership toolkit for school and kindergarten leaders as a practical *'tool that we can actually use'* [5.3a]. A Ministry of Education official responsible for teacher and school leader training in Baden-Württemberg, Germany said equity would be *'one decisive part'* of training to build inclusion within schools and that these ideas from EPNoSL would be implemented within the qualifying criteria of their school leaders [5.3a]. Another Estonian official, working for the Ministry of Education, said she would use EPNoSL resources for the development of a professional development framework for new headteachers [5.3b]. The Ministries of Education for Cyprus and Romania said they would use the resources in the ongoing process of decentralisation of their education systems [5.3c].

EPNoSL evolved into the European Education Policy Network (EEPN) on Teachers and School Leaders, which launched in January 2019, funded by the European Commission. This Europe-wide network of policymakers and practitioners is designed to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. In December 2019 it published six school leadership policy recommendations for EU institutions, EU member states and national, regional and local decision-makers, one of which called on them to: *'Advocate a whole school approach and democratic school culture by ensuring democratic and collaborative school leadership with the participatory approaches of all relevant school actors (school heads, teachers, parents, students, etc.) as an example to create democratic and inclusive school environment'* (their emphasis) [5.4]. The European School Heads Association, the report coordinator, confirmed that Woods' research and his work on the EPNoSL toolkit influenced this policy recommendation, which it says has supported evidence-based policy work on school leadership by the European Commission and national governments [5.4].

The defining discourse of the EFFEct project [G2] on best practice for collaborative teacher learning (CTL) was framed by the conceptualisation of democratic, collaborative leadership and its formulation as DLE. The key output from the project was an e-guide (published January 2018) that provided practical tools for all professionals and practitioners engaged in CTL; Woods and Roberts authored two key chapters. Tempus Public Foundation, a non-profit organisation established by the Hungarian Government to undertake specialist education projects, coordinated EFFEct. Tempus's project lead [5.5] said the EFFEct project outcomes were used

... 'on a national level, in other programmes, trainings in the field of Erasmus+ by schools, National Agencies.'

### **Professional development of teacher leaders internationally via the HertsCam Network**

Woods' research has played a key role in the two main teacher leadership programmes of the charity HertsCam Network. This is an organisation that enables the development of shared or distributed leadership in schools in order to build leadership capacity, improve professional practice and strengthen democratic ways of life in society more widely. In 2016, as part of EFFECT [G2], Woods and Roberts published a set of best practice case studies for how teachers have exercised collaborative leadership to enhance their own development and that of their students. Citing the research in 3.4 and 3.5, HertsCam Network used these case studies 'to support the development of our teacher leadership work in many different parts of the world' including Malaysia, Morocco and Kazakhstan [5.6]. As an indication of the reach of the Network's international teacher leadership programme, in 2019 it trained 32 facilitators in Kazakhstan (drawing on Woods' methodologies [5.6]), who have engaged 180 teachers in the country. The same year, the Network's presence in Egypt grew to include 11 schools, 24 facilitators and 121 participants [5.7].

Woods' work has had a significant influence over the course content of HertsCam's own master's programme: *MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning*. The two-year, part-time programme, taught by practising school leaders and validated by UH, is designed to support the development of practice in schools by enabling participants to become effective agents of change. Fifty-five students have graduated during the impact period. The Network uses the Distributed Leadership Videoscribe [5.2], which it describes as 'an excellent resource' [5.6]. The Network's founding director wrote: 'Our students are all practitioners involved in contributing to the improvement of practice in their schools, so this resource (the Videoscribe) and the work that underpins it (the 2016 case studies and 3.5) is very helpful to them in making a sense of the challenge of building leadership capacity in their schools [5.6].' An e-book *Teachers as Agents of Change*, published by HertsCam in 2018 and drawing on the experiences of running the MEd programme, has been made freely available to the sector. It specifically cites the 2016 case studies and 3.5 [5.7].

### **Building capacity for collaborative leadership among school leaders in the United States**

Based on the ideas and insights in 3.5, Woods and Roberts created a practical resource for policy makers and practitioners in school education, who are looking to work with others to nurture the practice of collaborative, democratic leadership. Developed in 2018, the booklet *Developing collaborative school leadership: catalysts to support reflection and action* was complemented by 32 reflection and action cards featuring statements relating to the contrast between school leadership cultures based on a philosophy of dependence and those based on co-development. The cards were designed for use in action planning workshops for professional development in leadership.

The action cards were used in school leader development workshops, facilitated by Woods, in the US in April 2018, one in Auburn, Alabama (organised through the University of Auburn) and one in Evansville, Indiana (organised through Ball State University). Fifteen teachers from several of the district's schools participated in the Auburn workshop. Forty-three teachers and students from the New Tech Institute and Owensboro School (high schools in Evansville) took part in the Indiana workshop. Evaluations [5.8] showed that 97% of participants considered the 'collaboration catalysts' a useful way of reflecting on their leadership, practice or organisation; 95% that it would change their approach to leadership and their organisation's practice; 86% that it had changed how they viewed and understood their leadership, practice or organisation.

According to qualitative feedback, one teacher said she now realised 'teachers and students share (the) same frustrations about policy', with students suggesting 'more specific change ideas' than teachers, and that she would 'look forward to policy/practice changes'. A student



wrote: *'I now plan on working with my team and groups and see if we can allow Democratic Leadership to prosper and permit groups to make decisions as a whole instead of one person alone making decisions.'* One school leader noted: *'To look at aspects of leadership in terms of where I am and where I want to be is something I personally needed. My relationships with others are pivotal to both their success and my success. This workshop helped me to think about focus for these relationships.'* Six months after the Indiana workshop, the principal of the New Tech Institute [5.9] explained that one of the actions *'as a direct result'* of the workshop was a school field trip to St Louis – after hearing from students and staff that these trips *'help them build community and togetherness'*. He wrote that the process in the workshop *'certainly opened our eyes to things we do together as a school'* and *'helped us discover ways in which we work together and how we can build community'*.

UH research also influenced school leadership practice through practitioner-facing frameworks and networks in the US. The DoDF was used by academics at Ohio University and the University of North Florida in developing a Developmental Democratic Planning (DDP) model; it *'builds on existing work engaging democratic leadership in educational settings'* (3.1 and 3.2 were cited). The DDP model was *'endorsed by the [US] National Council of Professors of Educational Administration as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 (kindergarten to 12th grade) education'* [5.10]. Woods' research (including 3.5) is described as having a *'profound impact'* on the work of the US-based New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership) network, a movement that seeks to *'reclaim educational reform, aiming it away from narrow neoliberalism towards social justice and democratic engagement with our communities'* [5.11]. Its Founding Director wrote that Woods' work *'has helped us to utilize our knowledge of democracy with educational leaders here and around the world'*. The Network, which has hundreds of members around the world, has helped *'change the curriculum of educational leadership programs'* and has created a mentoring programme for teachers, administrators and education boards in the Central Bucks School District (Pennsylvania's third largest district). This is *'helping professionals to learn new skills and new perspectives'* [5.11].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 The School Leadership Toolkit for Equity and Learning based on Woods' DLE concept.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190531143307/http://toolkit.schoolleadership.eu/>

5.2 'Leadership is ... distributed'. YouTube Videoscribe by Woods and Roberts, September 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5F0MNRDSpY> (Views: 28,340 – December 2020)

5.3 Interviews with European ministry of education officials on policy actions arising from EPNoSL: a) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXx8EBHsaSs> (6m30s – 7m24s);

b) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukjU6q\\_KGR8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukjU6q_KGR8) (4m40s – 5m50s)

c) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9idrW4pXMws> (5m14s onwards)

5.4 (a) EEPN: *Policy recommendations on careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders 2019*: [https://educationpolicy.network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Deliverable-4\\_2-Policy-recommendations-v2.pdf](https://educationpolicy.network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Deliverable-4_2-Policy-recommendations-v2.pdf) (para 4, page 3); (b)

Corroborating statement from the European School Heads Association on behalf of EEPN.

5.5 Statement from Tempus Public Foundation that corroborates the impact of EFFECT and the Guide for Facilitators of Collaborative Teacher Learning (<http://effect.tka.hu/methodological-framework>)

5.6 Corroborating statement from the Founder of the HertsCam Network.

5.7 Relevant weblinks on the HertsCam Network website:

<https://www.hertscam.org.uk/the-international-teacher-leadership-itl-initiative.html>;

[https://www.hertscam.org.uk/uploads/2/5/9/7/25979128/green\\_e-book.pdf](https://www.hertscam.org.uk/uploads/2/5/9/7/25979128/green_e-book.pdf)

5.8 Evaluation report of collaborative leadership action planning workshops in the United States.

5.9 Corroborating statement from the Principal of the New Tech Institute in Evansville, Indiana.

5.10 A Developmental Model for Educational Planning: Democratic Rationalities and Dispositions. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1024108.pdf>

5.11 Corroborating statement from the Founding Director of the New DEEL network.