

Connected and Collaborative Systems Leadership 2023 -2024

Think Piece Summaries



Connected and Collaborative Systems Leadership (CCSL) is founded upon the latest national and international policy context and research and builds on the previous iteration: Excellence in Headship Stretch.

The programme presents a pathway of professional learning for headteachers in collaboration with system leaders including colleagues from local authorities and national agencies. A major element of the system leadership learning is a collaborative professional enquiry around key areas of educational policy and theory identified by enquiry groups. The purpose of the enquiry is not simply to research and deepen shared knowledge but also to inform future action and improvement. The collaborative enquiry groups seek to ‘nudge’ the system at the most appropriate level(s). Groups are then tasked with developing a ‘Think Piece’ that highlights their collaborative enquiry findings in the form of observations and recommendations. These are then shared with colleagues across the Scottish education system, including Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Professional Associations, in addition a range of key stakeholders to support headteacher influence, representation and participation in the policy making process.

Lead Specialists: Our role in facilitating Connected and Collaborative Systems Leadership.

Professional Learning and Leadership Lead Specialists have acted as facilitators and connectors; signposting participants to relevant contacts, resources and networks, related to their area of collaborative enquiry. Through the exploration of collaborative enquiry we have supported our colleagues in developing a shared understanding of collaborative professionalism, enquiry and system leadership. The Think Pieces are representative of the learning of participants through the enquiry process and therefore are not attributed to the views of Education Scotland.

This system leadership learning has been designed with the National Model of Professional Learning at the heart: The communication of these Think Piece summaries is an important stage in this process as experienced leaders communicate their learning journey, findings and further explore agency. “Leaders in the widest sense understand that people are the drivers and enactors of change for improvement. Professional learning and development is the means by which this is put into action.”

[National model of professional learning1](#)



Think Piece Summaries

[To what extent do we need to elevate achievement, beyond the benchmarks, to promote parity of esteem in each of the four capacities beyond literacy and numeracy?](#)

This Think Piece outlines the importance of centralising a skills based approach in Education, ensuring that we elevate achievement beyond traditional benchmarks to ensure parity of esteem across the four capacities. Utilising SCQF points from primary and collaborating with HMIE are noted as key, along with effective leadership and systemic change that reflects educators' contributions. The key recommendation is to shift focus from narrow assessments to a broader appreciation of skills and attributes, ensuring alignment with our values.



[Do Care Experienced children and young people achieve sustained positive destinations which are appropriate to their skills and attributes?](#)

This Think Piece focuses on whether CE young people achieve suitable, sustained positive destinations. Despite efforts, many CE students face challenges due to trauma and a lack of tailored support, often leaving education prematurely. Strategies proposed include improving corporate parenting, fostering supportive communities, and providing appropriate curricula. Recommendations call for dedicated Virtual Head Teachers and strengthened connections with advocacy groups to support CE youths and mitigate stigma.



[How can the current system evolve to create capacity for teacher engagement in high quality CLPL?](#)

This Think Piece seeks to drive systemic change in education, focusing on better outcomes for children, especially those disengaged from school. It highlights the vital role of teachers as system leaders and stresses the importance of high-quality professional learning. Recommendations include increasing school autonomy in professional learning, evaluating its impact on student outcomes, and enhancing support for school leaders.



[How are local authority systems for ASN data collection moderated to provide coherent information?](#)

This Think Piece outlines the importance of considering data collection and recording so that it is robust across authorities and ensures we best meet ASN requirements of all learners. Taking National and Local Authority policies into consideration, anomalies are highlighted using surveys from Headteachers and those working in sample Local Authorities. Key findings look to the need for establishing a standardised approach and the possibility of utilising SEEMiS as a key tool for data gathering.



[Is Our S1 Curriculum Fit for Purpose?](#)

This Think Piece highlights the subjective nature of Experiences and Outcomes in Scotland's curriculum, contributing to incoherence and barriers in learner progression from primary to secondary. Research suggests that a co-constructed curriculum, understood by both P7 and S1 teachers, fosters true progression. Recommendations include establishing a national network of curriculum developers for clear guidance of necessary skills and knowledge, updating Education Scotland's Knowledge Hub for better resource access, and allowing practitioners to actively participate in curriculum design.



GIRFEC – Is it a myth? Are we inclusive?

Scotland faces significant challenges in education, particularly amid rising ASN and non-attendance figures. This Think Piece notes that while the Scottish Government promotes inclusive education, the reality reveals gaps in implementation, particularly regarding key feature of "presence." Attendance has declined, largely due to mental health issues. Effective inclusion requires precise data collection, collaboration among services, community support, and courageous leadership to enact systemic change. Although GIRFEC is commendable, substantial work remains to address these challenges and fulfil the promise of inclusive education.



To what extent does the summative element of inspection promote school improvement?

This Think Piece considers the summative element of inspection in Scotland and explores its impact on school improvement. The process aims to improve schools but often pressures headteachers and staff, leading to negative consequences. Critics argue that evaluative gradings overshadow valuable feedback needed for real development. Stakeholders were interviewed and findings show they advocated for removing these gradings in favour of formative assessments and collaboration. Recommendations include reforming the inspection framework, enhancing self-evaluation processes, and fostering partnerships to create a supportive environment for schools.



How do we provide learners with the skills they need for a changing world?

This Think Piece considers how to equip learners with essential skills for a changing world. Gaps were outlined in the current curriculum through discussions with educators and businesses. A consensus on the need for a national, consistent skills-based curriculum is outlined. Research clarifies the key transferable skills necessary for success and the Think Piece recommends creating a progressive National Skills Development Framework and fostering collaboration across education and industry to enhance curriculum design.



What is needed to move the GTCS Standards from theory to practice and become embedded in the professional culture of the Scottish Education System?

This Think Piece outlines that to embed the GTCS Professional Standards in Scottish education, teachers need greater ownership, as current practices limit their engagement. CLPL should align with these standards rather than solely focus on school improvement. A consistent approach to local authority PRD systems is essential, along with establishing an Early Career Teacher Standard and enhancing mentoring programs. Key recommendations include linking CLPL to the standards, promoting self-evaluation, and creating a user-friendly digital platform for easier access to all resources.



Should there be a National Skills Development Framework underpinning the 4 Capacities?

Through analysis of research this Think Piece unearthed key themes, namely there is inconsistency in the existing skills frameworks and a need to reinforce the four capacities. Proposals outline the need to establish a single National Skills Framework to guide the development of these capacities as part of CfE. This framework should ensure a balanced approach to knowledge and skills development, with both assessed equally. It outlines the need for this work to be endorsed by Education Scotland and industry partners to foster collaboration and consistency across the educational landscape.

