

Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other

learning with each other

learning on behalf of each other

DEVELOPMENT AND ENQUIRY PROGRAMMES
COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP LEARNING



National College for
School Leadership

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Programme outline and dates

Residential:
19 to 20 January 2004

- Aims, purposes ,expectations of the programme
 - Programme overview
 - Shared experience of leadership learning
 - Establishment of group learning agreements
 - Reflections on facilitation
-

Regional groups learning day:
5 March 2004

Regional groups learning day:
27 April 2004

Regional groups learning day:
15 June 2004

Residential:
23 to 24 September 2004

Regional groups learning day:
18 November 2004

Regional groups learning day:
19 January 2005

Regional groups learning day:
4 March 2005

Residential – review:
28 to 29 April 2005

If a group of school leaders make a commitment to working together as a learning group, over a period of time, they might consider themselves a Collaborative Leadership Learning (CLL) Group.

By giving themselves opportunities to be learners, as well as leaders, they can, over time, develop learning habits which impact on how they lead their schools and how their schools learn.

They can develop common purpose and shared understandings which support more effective in-school and cross-school work at a number of levels.

However, it's not always easy.

All too often, when school leaders meet together, there is a lot to do and tasks can take over. Even when specific learning items are tackled, they can take the form of presentations about topics which are external to the leader – the learning of others is seen as more important than one's own.

But evidence from NCSL work (such as the Collaborative Leadership Learning pilots and the New Visions Programme for Early Headship), as well as from international practice, suggests that when groups of leaders can challenge themselves to collaborate as learners, it can transform the way they lead their schools.

The support programme

The CLL support programme is built around a conceptual framework which has been tested and developed through pilot work and through the New Visions programme. It is designed to support leadership learning groups by exploring and strengthening understanding of:

- learning models
- leadership practice
- processes for leadership learning
- facilitation of leadership learning groups
- links between individual learning, group learning, and the work.

“ Leaders lead from the same model we have been exploring for teaching itself, creating a space around the great thing called teaching and learning around which a community of truth can gather”

Parker Palmer, ‘The Courage to Teach’ 1998

Benefits

For participants

Participants will be given opportunities to:

- develop extensive facilitation skills for leading or co-leading Leadership Learning Groups (LLGs)
- deepen understanding of the issues confronting leaders in schools and the nature of leadership
- experience powerful processes and models of learning and link these to the work of LLGs
- benefit from ongoing support and engagement with other groups.

For organisations (schools, networks, LEAs, Diocesan and other groups)

Participants will be given opportunities to:

- gain greater confidence and skill in leading and participating in leadership learning groups
- extend understanding of learning for leadership brought back in to the organisation
- develop materials for use in other leadership learning groups and schools.

The CLL support programme is based on a model of professional learning which draws on three types of knowledge:

- the knowledge that they themselves bring
- external knowledge in theory, research and other knowledge in the public domain
- new knowledge that is created through the collaborative processes within the programme.

This is commonly known as the **Three Fields of Knowledge** model and is shown in figure 1 below.

- The knowledge which the participants themselves bring. For example, 'as a headteacher, I understand the processes I have used in our school to engage a number of others in leadership responsibility.'
- Knowledge which is external, public, or validated. For example, an extract from a well known book on developing leadership capacity in schools, 'which I and others can use to challenge or deepen our thinking about how we engage others in leadership.'
- New knowledge which is collaboratively constructed through the processes and interactions in the programme. 'By working with clear protocols and using my knowledge and the selected texts, we change perceptions about how we lead and what else we can do to make the aim of shared leadership in school more of a reality.'

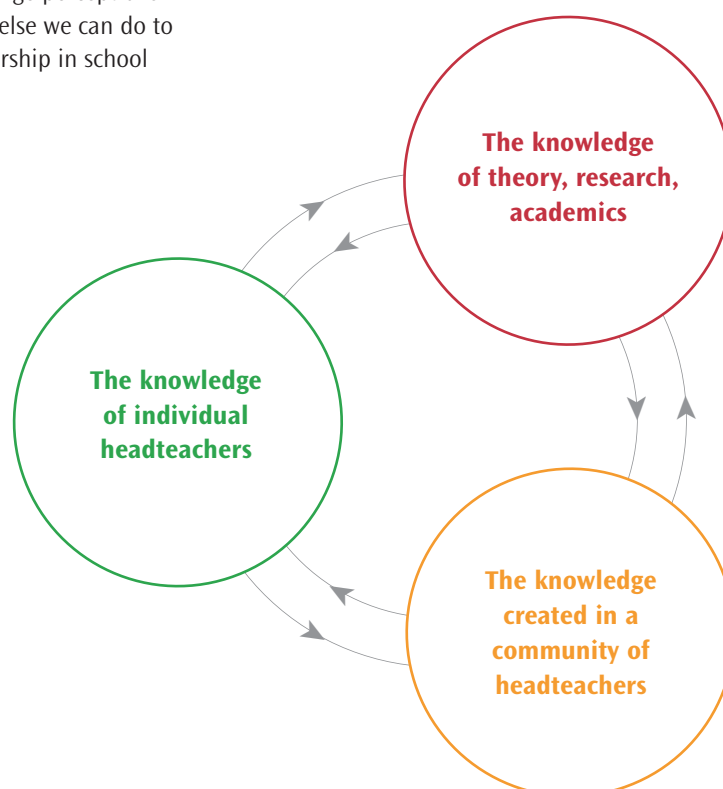
A central component of this model relates to 'making meaning'. When leaders develop collective understanding in ways which help them to make more sense of their own role and work, they are able to develop a shared purpose for schooling.

One of the key implications of adopting this approach to knowledge and learning is that the 'content' for leadership learning differs from conventional approaches and that learning processes assume new significance.

What does that mean in practice?

*"The mind is not a vessel to be filled,
but a fire to be ignited" Plutarch*

Figure 1: The Three Fields of Knowledge Model



“Learning is not uniform and cannot be specified in advance; it is not assembled like parts of a machine but rather evolves in non-linear ways from the experiences and attitudes of the learners” Deborah Walker, 2002

The first thing to say about the programme framework and structure is that it is not prescribed. What leaders do when they come together to learn, and how they work, depends on them.

This project is therefore particularly designed to provide quality development for facilitators of collaborative learning groups.

What is the overarching aim?

The aim of this programme is:

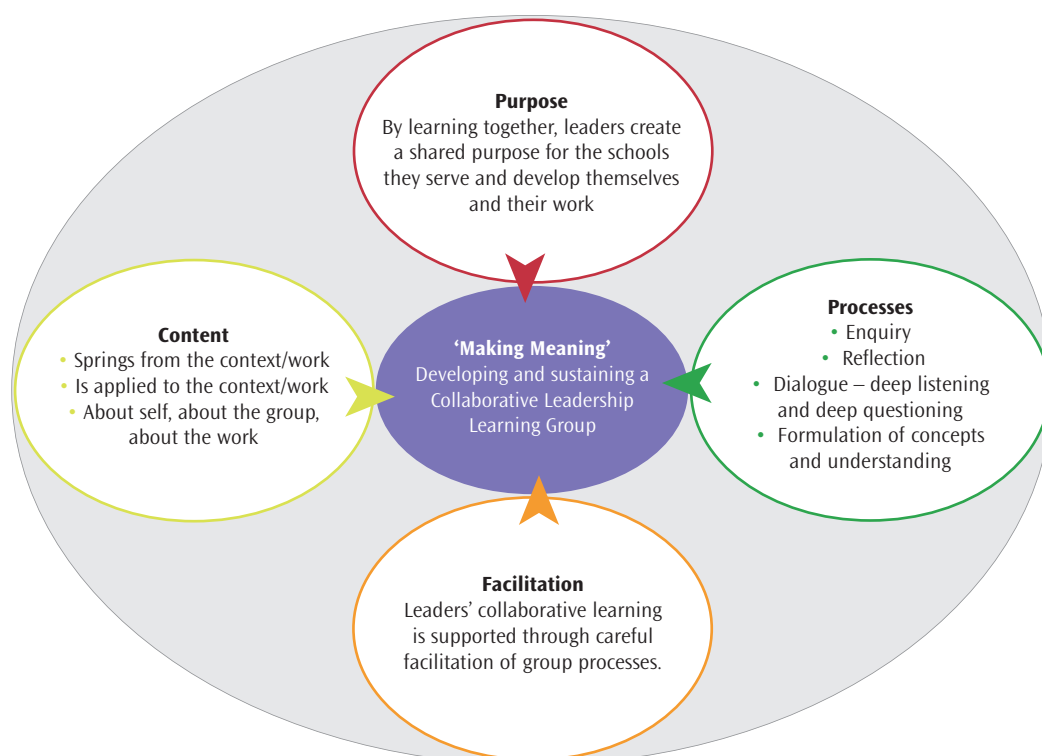
- to enable you to understand your role in leading/co-leading your leadership learning group, basing your approach on collaborative learning principles.

What are the ways we will achieve this aim?

- Bring experiences from your practice to the programme for further exploration.
- Use collaborative learning approaches during the programme.
- Reflect on the experience of collaborative learning.
- Use this reflection to inform practice in your existing, or new, learning for leadership groups that you are leading/co-leading.

There are some important principles at work in the structuring of the CLL support programme. These are expressed in a series of learning statements and are illustrated in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Learning statements



How is the programme organised and supported?

Over the course of the 12-month programme, groups of 12–15 facilitators, each working with their own local group, will meet for regular workshops.

Facilitators will focus on the following key areas:

- personal learning about the facilitation of leadership learning groups
- on-going support for the leadership of such groups through action learning
- the creation of processes, tools and materials which can be used more widely.

This is not a learning about ‘because I’m interested’ programme but a ‘learning from’ because I’m doing it programme. The collaborative learning approach therefore requires participants to commit to attend the programme in full.

The programme can be envisaged as a process of:

- experience during the programme
- reflection on that experience
- developing new ideas
- planning to action these ideas.

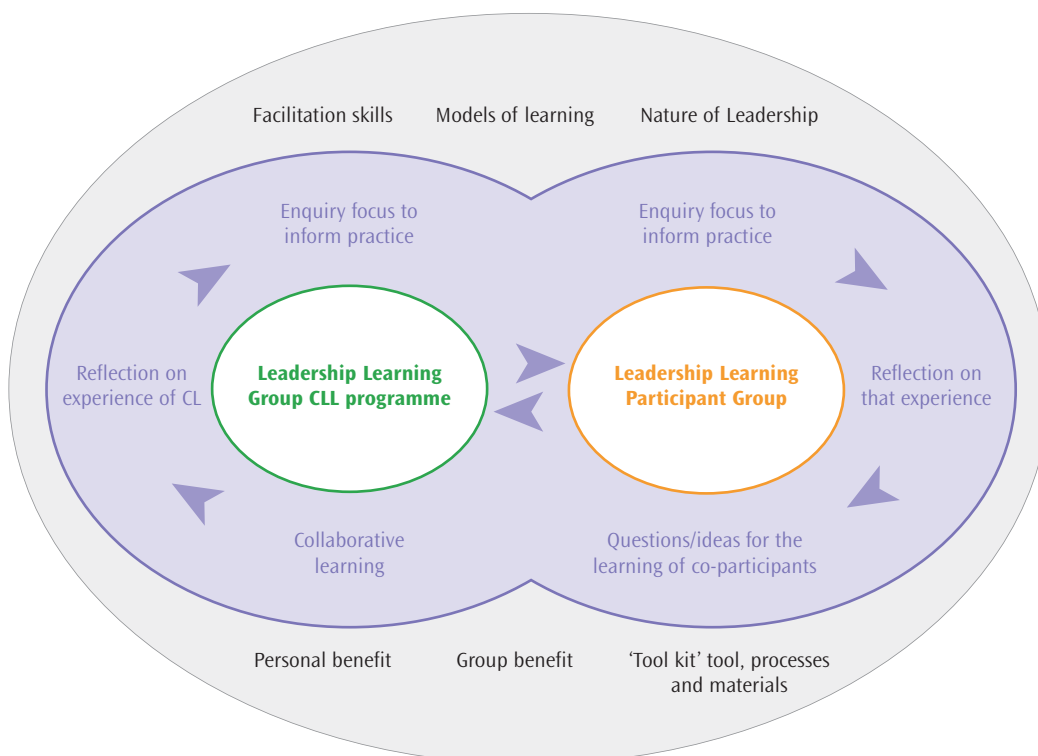
Followed back in your CLL group by:

- experience in leading/co-leading your group
- reflection on that experience
- developing your ideas to bring back to the programme
- putting these ideas into the programme for the learning of co-participants.

This can be illustrated as in figure 3.

Just as the purpose, the balance of content and process and the facilitation of learning are pillars upon which the CLL support programme is built, so, too, are they important for the wider community of CLL groups.

Figure 3: How the CLL programme is supported and organised



What expectations does the programme have of you?

The success of the programme, both for individuals and for collaborative learning of the group, depends upon the participants to accept certain responsibilities and acknowledge that the investment made by them is done so on behalf of the Collaborative Leadership Learning Group they are working with and, ultimately, students of the schools.

- Participants should have a genuine desire to learn more about themselves as leaders and the work of leading a CLL group.
- They must have a commitment to working collaboratively with others on that learning.
- All participants will therefore be expected to learn with, learn from, and contribute to the learning of, others in the group.
- Regular attendance at the group sessions will be required.
- All participants will also be expected to work with their own CLL group on a regular basis.
- Participants will be expected to draw on their experience of leadership and of the CLL group, but relate that to a wider evidence base, through reading, reflection and active learning processes.

Participants will be expected to engage in school-based enquiry as part of their learning and leadership practice.

- Participants should commit to working collaboratively with a group of colleagues for the life of the programme, to engage in enquiry, problem framing and problem solving, the sharing of knowledge and the development of new understandings.
- By engaging in this process they will, over time, develop as a community of practice, learning for themselves and on behalf of others.

The statements which follow, underpin the approach to learning within the programme. They are worth examining and debating.

The purpose for leadership learning groups springs from the belief that by learning together, leaders create a shared purpose for the schools they serve, in addition to developing themselves and their work.

The notion of ‘making meaning’, developing deeper and shared understandings from multiple viewpoints, implies attention to purpose and values. It also implies attention to language, reciprocal relationships and dialogue. The nature and quality of conversations that leaders engage in are the basis for learning relationships.

The content of leadership learning is contextually relevant – it springs from the context (the work leaders are engaged in) and is applied to it.

Specific attention is paid to learning processes, so that they become a means of supporting:

- enquiry
- critical reflection
- dialogue – deep listening and deep questioning
- formulation of concepts and understanding.

Specific learning processes aid the development of learning habits which impact on how leaders lead.

A climate where challenge and support can co-exist, presupposes that leaders will both make a commitment to openness and to learning with, from and on behalf of others. It also implies that they will attend to the way the group itself is working.

Enquiry is a strong feature of the programme. Learning within the programme is seen as a social activity which is strengthened by shared enquiry. When leaders adopt the maxim, ‘we are students of our work’, they are better able to enquire into problems and possibilities. By working with others they are able to challenge their own perspectives and develop their understandings of their work and their role.

Reflection is an essential dimension of the programme. Learners can clarify their understandings and analyse their actions in ways which they can then translate into action.

The notion of translating learning into action potentially links adult and child learning. There are patterns in adult and child learning needs that recur in complex ways. It is therefore valid to consider that if something is worthy for adults, it is also worthy for children.

Facilitation of learning and group processes is critical. It is therefore seen as important those who are going to facilitate the learning of others experience the processes for themselves and embark on a learning journey of their own.

Learning processes, protocols and methods

The programme uses a range of methods to support the development of reflective learning habits and action enquiry.

Action learning sets

- These are opportunities for small groups to work with individual participants' current issues.
- Action learning is based around the belief that there is no learning without action.
- The action learning sets use a clear protocol which emphasises supportive, yet challenging, questioning.
- Questioning and critical reflection upon action and experience provide insights that determine future action.
- Set activity incorporates both the planning and review of the implementation of solutions.

Appreciative enquiry

- Appreciative enquiry is an effective way of creating positive change in organisations.
- It is a collaborative organisational development intervention that offers a new way of looking at the positive aspects of organisational life.
- The way we learn is through enquiry and asking questions. Appreciative enquiry is about engaging the positive energies of people in dialogue.
- It is typically a four-stage process that is viewed as being a helpful way of constructing a better future, particularly in times of rapid change and uncertainty.
- It enables people and organisations to create change by paying attention to what they want more of.

Reflection

- Within the programme the term 'reflection' is the structured critical and analytical review of practice that helps to clarify understanding and inform future action.
- Reflection is supported by a range of strategies, such as through dialogue with a colleague or mentor, or through a written process.
- It can include reflection around specific incidents – critical incident analysis.
- It is often assisted by the use of a learning journal – a reflective narrative that supports systematic review and planning.
- Reflection is based upon developing professional, perceptual and self-awareness.

Study groups

- Use readings as a starting point and stimulus for reflection, analysis and interaction.
- A study group is a collaborative approach that enables and empowers leaders by raising difficult professional issues and articulating common solutions.
- Participation in such a group is designed to promote the confidence to engage critically with theory, literature and practice.

Enquiry visits

- The use of a structured and focused programme of visits by members of an established group to schools or other organisations can provide a powerful form of enquiry and collaborative learning.
- They are best supported by use of a clear agenda and an agreed protocol to support investigation, data collection, synthesis and application.

Narrative as experience text

- Narrative as experience text is a protocol to examine the experience of practice through written and spoken narrative accounts.
- There are a number of stages, including selection, framing, shaping, articulating, listening and adjusting, which allow individuals to both relate experience and, with others, consider implications.

Dialogue

- The learning processes in the programme offer a number of ways for participants to engage in structured dialogue.
- This dialogue is central to the programme's principles and design.
- It involves enquiry, curiosity, listening, exploring assumptions and beliefs in order to understand and make sense of one's own and others experiences.
- Critically, participants focus on deep listening, deep questioning, analysing and conceptualising to develop new insights and shared understandings.

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