

## Collaborative learning from practice partnerships: an opportunity for teacher education



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### Outline

- Collaborative learning with and from practice partnerships – rationale
- Collaborative learning with practice partnerships
- Collaborative learning from these partnerships

I am an applied researcher (sometimes described as a 'pracademic').  
My focus is on schools (with some research in kindergartens too) – my books include titles such as:

- School Matters – with Peter Mortimore and colleagues
- Changing Our Schools – with Dean Fink
- It's About Learning (and it's about time) – with Dean Fink and Lorna Earl
- Professional Learning Communities – edited with Karen Seashore Louis

I don't research universities and teacher education institutions

I am interested in how we can make better links between research and practice

#### Imperatives for change:

egs  
Technology  
Environment  
Mental health/wellbeing  
People living longer  
  
COVID-19

#### Responses:

Changes in curriculum to prepare pupils for their future  
  
egs  
Latvia  
Scotland  
Singapore  
Wales  
  
The OECD's 2030 initiative and Learning Compass  
  
... and Norway's new curriculum

### Creating 21<sup>st</sup> century schools: key ingredients

1. Confident teachers who collaborate – self-regulated knowledge workers, peer networking
2. Willingness to innovate – adaptable and creative
3. Learning leadership which establishes conditions that enable 1 and 2 to flourish

Drawing on OECD (2012, 2013 and 2016),  
Schleicher (OECD, 2015)

### Thinking as collective action

.... people are like bees and society in a beehive: our intelligence resides not in individual brains but in the collective mind. . . . Human thought is .... a product of a community, not of any individual alone.

. . . The contributions we make as individuals depend more on our ability to work with others than on our individual mental horsepower.

Sloman and Fernbach (2017)  
The Knowledge Illusion

## Creative professional learning communities



## School leadership matters for research-informed practice

Schools and teachers are more or less 'research-engaged'

Coldwell et al (2017)

- Draw on research evidence (directly or translated by school leaders) to integrate and trial, prompted by need to solve practical problem
- Most teachers not confident around research
- Teachers' valuing of research evidence influenced by senior leaders
- In highly research-engaged schools, 'research use' = integrating research evidence into all aspects of work as part of continual improvement and reflection
- School leaders' support is most important driver. They can make changes to increase engagement

Evidence-deprived

Evidence-based

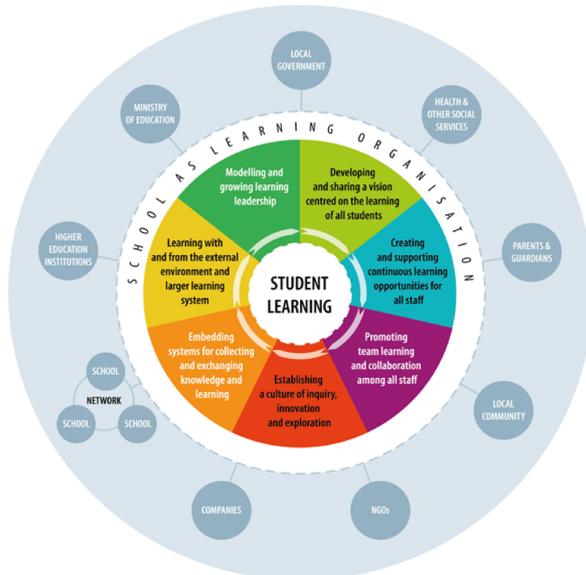
Evidence-informed

Evidence-enriched



Stoll (2018) for  
LearnLab, Norway

## What makes a school a learning organisation?



A school as a learning organisation has the capacity to change and adapt routinely to new environments and circumstances as its members, individually and together, learn their way to realising their vision

Kools and Stoll (2016)

## Collaborative learning with practice partnerships

### Interconnected principles for partnerships as professional learning communities

1. Genuine knowledge exchange in equal, respectful and trusting relationships
2. Helping schools/kindergartens to become learning organisations – learning alongside them
3. Co-constructed design that is both evidence-informed *and* practice-informed

### Three examples

- Transforming schools into learning organisations in Wales <https://gov.wales/schools-learning-organisations-slo-overview>
  - Middle leaders as catalysts for change knowledge exchange partnership project in England <https://www.oecd.org/education/developing-schools-as-learning-organisations-in-wales-9789264307193-en.htm>
  - Collaborative leadership learning programme with four municipalities in Norway <https://www.ioe-rdnetwork.com/catalyst.html>
- Contact Tore Skandsen for further details:  
tore.skandsen@inn.no

## 1. Genuine knowledge exchange in equal, respectful and trusting relationships

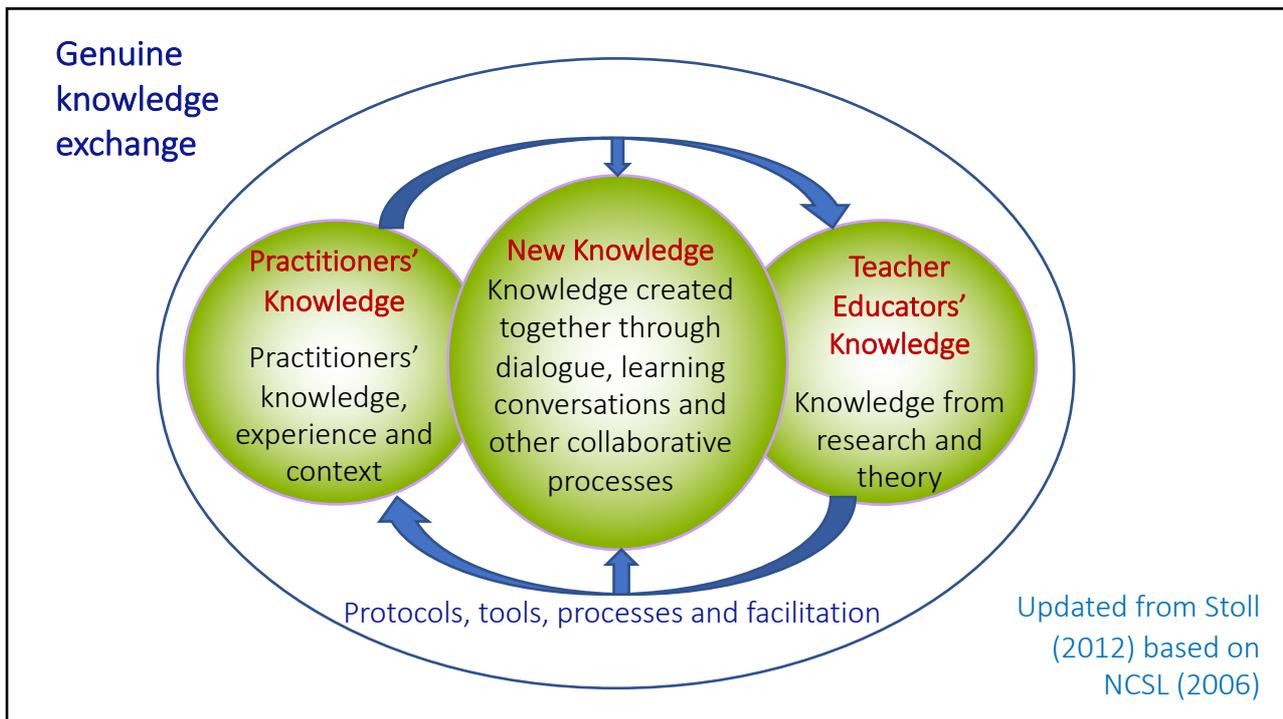
### Knowledge exchange

Two-way dialogue and collaboration between social scientists and research users.

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

Knowledge exchange is collaborative problem-solving between researchers and decision makers . . . Effective knowledge exchange involves interaction between decision makers and researchers and results in mutual learning through the process of planning, producing, disseminating, and applying existing or new research in decision-making.

Adapted from Canadian Health Services  
Research Foundation



The result of professional learning isn't only visible in changes in practice but also "in one's thinking about the how and why of that practice"

Kelchtermans (2004)

Interrupting assumptions

Katz and Dack (2013)

Personalisation of the SLO framework

The Welsh framework was contextualised during several sessions and meetings



OECD (2016)

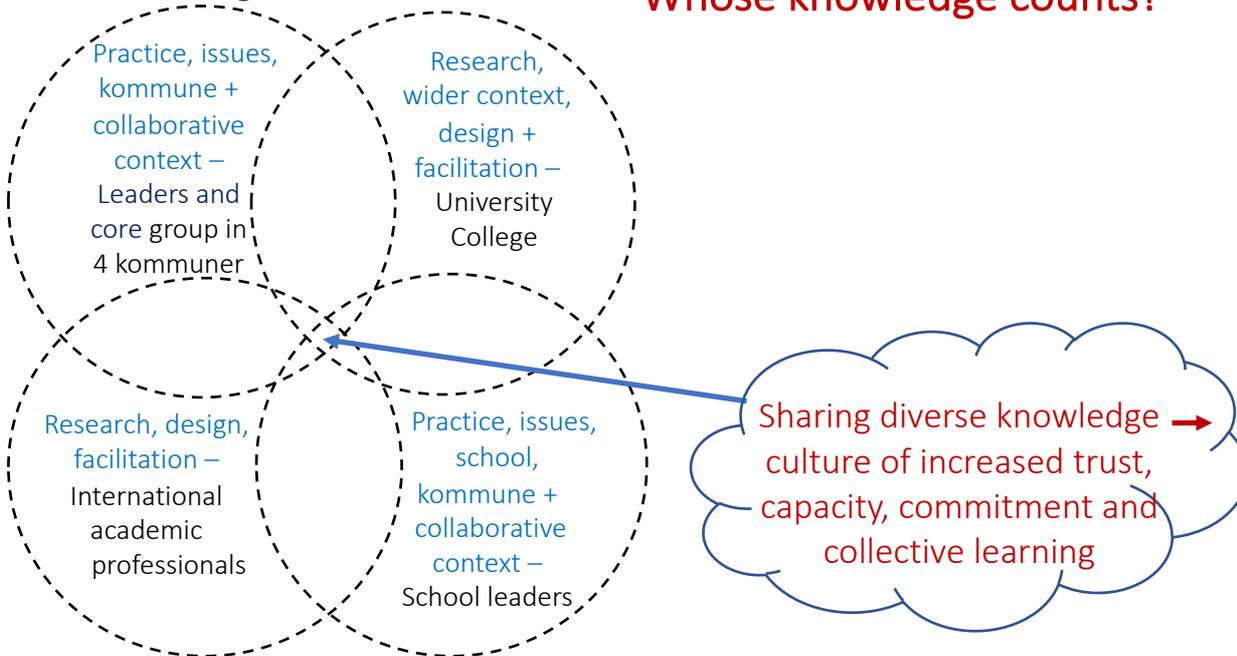


<https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/f87e720f-8568-4a60-9383-55e20b9a1bb7/schools-in-wales-as-learning-organisations.pdf>

Welsh Government (2017)

CLLP knowledge of:

Whose knowledge counts?

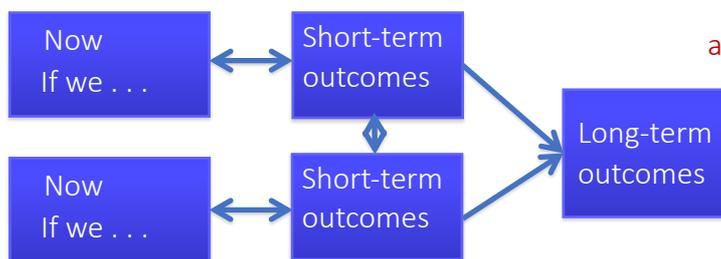


**2. Helping schools/kindergartens to become learning organisations**

**Theories of change**

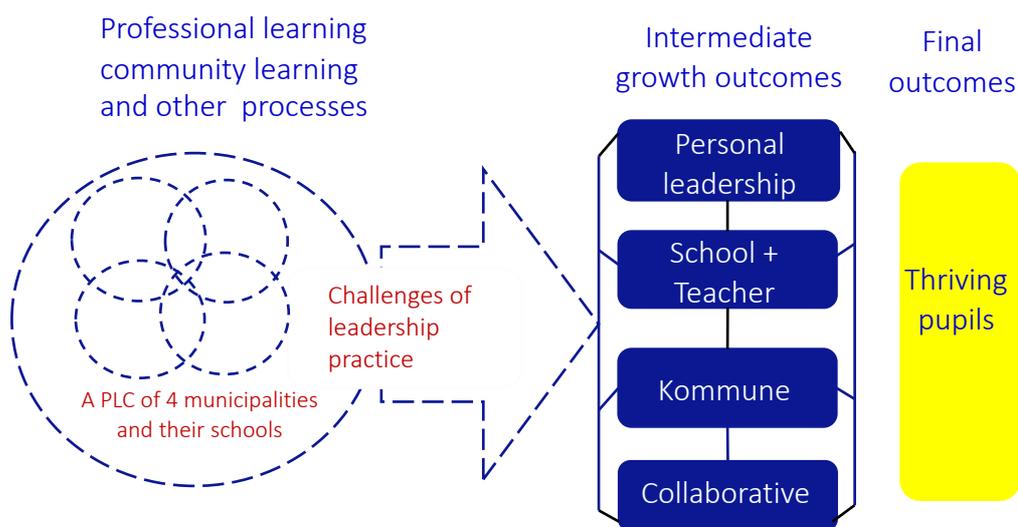
An organisation’s ‘theory’, or story of how it will make change in the world. . . an explanation of why certain things happen. A diagram that maps:

- the intended impact on the world and how things will be different because of the work – long-term outcomes
- the changes necessary now for these impacts to come about – interventions, short-term or intermediate outcomes, and associated assumptions



Adapted from Earl and Timperley (2015)

**Collaborative Leadership Learning Programme – Theory of Change**



## Design principles

### 3. Co-constructed evidence-informed and practice-informed design

- Project/programme led by practitioner needs
- Co-constructed, drawing on different fields of knowledge – research, practice, context
- Teams from each participating organisation, including leader
- Focused on challenges of practice
- Learning over time + networking with other organisation leaders in and between sessions
- Developing capacity to lead, facilitate and evaluate change, improvement and transformation related to specific focus – changing balance over time
- Collective learning – sharing and processing learning, evaluating sessions and phases, feeding this into subsequent sessions/phases, revising theory of change as necessary
- Ensuring practical, tangible outcomes for participants and other practitioners



## Knowledge animation

Ways of making knowledge accessible and mobile to promote learning connections and use

Stoll (2009)

anima – from the Latin = breath, life, soul

animate – bring to life, put in motion

Suggests action and movement, dynamism and vibrancy, invigoration and innovation

## Animating external research knowledge

- helps practitioners encounter research in manageable units of meaning and in accessible, varied formats
- presents evidence in ways that:
  - capture interest and deepen engagement
  - stimulate exploration of topics and issues
  - challenge thinking
  - aid reflection on practice
  - help people articulate tacit knowledge, beliefs, theories of action
  - help social processing by feeding conversations
  - stimulate collaborative learning, enquiry and problem solving
  - move them to generate new knowledge, and take action that will enhance their practice, and evaluate changes

Updated from Stoll and Brown (2015)



## Questions for group dialogue

- What resonates?
- What supports collaborative learning in your practice partnerships?
- What might you develop further?

## Collaborative learning from practice partnerships

1. Developing your knowledge exchange infrastructure and culture
2. Creating the conditions - being a learning organisation

## 1. Developing your knowledge exchange infrastructure and culture

- Strategy and leadership culture
- Teams
- Processes and activity
- External partners
- Resource, technology and communication infrastructure

If you know something about music or farming, or if you have wisdom and don't share it, then you are selfish. You can't learn the entire sea by heart.

Ali Farka Toure,  
blues singer and  
former mayor of Niafunke, Mali

What leadership conditions in schools help develop and embed cultures of shared practice?



- Believe it's important
- Communicate the vision for change
- Model collaborative practices
- Nurture critical friendship
- Encourage risk taking
- Provide opportunities for exchange
- Celebrate success



What conditions does your organisation create to develop a culture of sharing knowledge and practice?

How do these findings (from schools) compare with your experience?

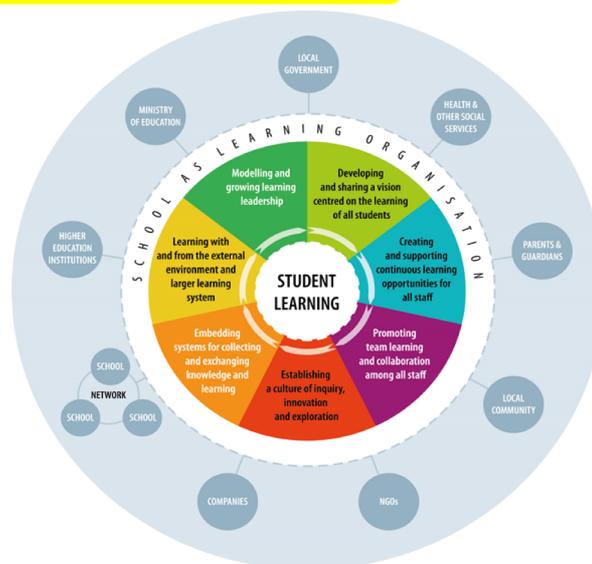
What else might you do?

Stoll et al (2018)

## 2. Creating the conditions - being a learning organisation

What does this mean for teacher education institutions?

- To support your competence work, you need to support schools/ kindergartens in developing (further) into learning organisations
- Model being a learning organisation



## Questions for group dialogue



- Is your organisation a learning organisation?
- What (else) do you need to do to develop it into a sustainable learning organisation?
- What can you learn from other organisations about knowledge exchange?