

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Nottingham		
Unit of Assessment: UOA23		
Title of case study: Improving the quality and effectiveness of school leaders and teachers		
1. Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christopher Day	Professor of Education	1st Jan 2000 – 31st Dec 2020
Qing Gu	Research Fellow / Associate Professor / Professor of Education	4 th Oct 2004 – 30 th Sep 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1st August 2013 -31st July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>A cluster of collaborative research programmes, led by Professor Christopher Day at the University of Nottingham, has been instrumental in improving school leadership practices, organisational strategies, and teachers' effectiveness, through the incorporation of his research on the design and delivery of national and local training programmes, and through informing educational policy formation in the context of current political and economic challenges in the UK and internationally. Day's work has engaged with multiple local, national and international stakeholders concerned with raising education standards at different system levels.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Day's main research aims are: i) increasing understandings of the intersections between schoolteachers' and leaders' work and lives (R1,2,3), and ii) influencing practice by narrowing the knowledge gap between university academics and school practitioners (R4,5,6). His theoretical, applied, and collaborative research has made a distinctive contribution to knowledge of the complex associations between external moderating (demographics and policy changes), internal mediating (school conditions, leadership, structures and cultures), and individual factors, and school improvement phases. This is key to understanding successful change leadership and teacher quality. His research has found significant and qualitatively authentic associations between levels of teachers' commitment and resilience in different career phases, and their perceived and measurable effectiveness in classrooms, and revealed the context-sensitive, direct and indirect contributions of principals to sustained school improvement. This work has impacted on the design of leadership development programmes supporting successful leadership practices across the world, and to policies regarding schools' improvement phases (R1,5). In 2016, Day was the first UK lead author to be awarded the prestigious William J Davies Prize (established 1979) for the best annual leadership research paper (R4).</p> <p>Between 2012 and 2019, Day conceptualised a set of related research projects on effective school principalship and co-led these with Gu. G1 (funded by the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta) is a rare longitudinal empirical analysis of system-led change internationally. It investigated system-led reform of the leadership and teaching and learning in 89 schools in Australia. G2 (the Association of Independent Schools) investigated the contextual school influences during an innovative and sustained professional learning change programme. G3 (ESRC) focused on how the intended outcomes of educational reforms are mediated by school leaders and</p>		

teachers in a diverse range of successful secondary schools in England and Hong Kong (R5). G4 (ESRC) was a schools-university knowledge exchange project with principals of schools serving disadvantaged urban communities. G5 (DfE) examined systemic and school level factors in England which were likely to attract, retain or lose teachers (R3).

Day has continued to direct the **International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP, see E)**. Founded by Day in 2001, ISSPP focuses on **the impact of successful leadership in schools in different socio-economic contexts within and between 27 countries**. This work has identified, for the first time, how successful school principals, in different policy and cultural contexts internationally, integrate generic sets of values, qualities and skills through the combination, accumulation and application of contextually sensitive strategies across school development phases, to achieve success (R1). Furthermore, Day's pioneering research has differentiated 'success' from 'effectiveness' and challenged the authenticity of single lens leadership 'models'. Since 2013, the ISSPP agenda has been expanded to include two additional strands: i) principalship in visible and invisible under-performing schools and ii) principals' identities. The ISSPP network has developed **the world's largest number of international case studies**, and has **resulted in over 100 academic outputs** since its inception (see E).

3. References to the research

Publications:

- R1. Day, C.W., Sammons, P., & Gorgen, K. (2020). *Successful Leadership*, Education Development Trust (*an electronic copy is stored at UoN and is available on request*).
- R2. Day, C. and Gu, Q. (2014). *Resilient Teachers, Resilient Schools*. London: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203578490>
- R3. Gu, Q., Day, C., Lamb, H., Leithwood, K., Sammons, P., Neat, S., Armstrong, P. and Hagger-Vaughan, L. (2015) *Why Teachers Leave and Return: Report on the Feasibility Study* Department for Education. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/why-teachers-leave-and-return-feasibility-study>
- R4. Day, C., Gu, Q. and Sammons, P. (2016). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: how successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221-258, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15616863>
- R5. Day, C. & Gu, Q. (2018). How Successful Secondary School Principals in England Respond to Policy Reforms: The Influence of Biography. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 17:3, 332-344, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2018.1496339>
- R6. Day, C. and Grice, C. (2019) *Investigating the Influence and Impact of Leading from the Middle: A School-based Strategy for Middle leaders in Schools*. University of Sydney, Australia. Available at <https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Resources/WAL%20%20%5BOpen%20Access%5D/Leading%20from%20the%20Middle%20-%20A%20School-based%20Strategy%20for%20Middle%20Leaders%20in%20Schools%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Research Funding:

- G1. 2018-2019 Change Leadership: A system Level Case Study; Diocese of Parramatta, Sydney, Australia (\$200,000 AUD). PI: Christopher Day; Co-I: Christine Grice (University of Sydney).

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- G2. 2017-2018 Investigating the Influence and Impact of 'Leading from the Middle: A School-Based Strategy for Middle Leaders in Schools; Association of Independent Schools Leadership Centre (\$100,000 AUD). PI: Christopher **Day**; Co-I: Christine Grice (University of Sydney).
- G3. 2012 - 2014 Reshaping Educational Practice for Improvement in Hong Kong and England: How Schools Mediate Government Reforms; Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project (£110,157). PI: Qing **Gu**; Co-I: Christopher **Day**.
- G4. 2013 - 2014 Leadership for Learning: Building Capacity for Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools Serving Disadvantaged Urban Communities; Economic and Social Science Research Council (£115,253). PI: Christopher **Day**; Co-Is: Qing **Gu** and Andrew **Townsend**.
- G5. 2014 - 2015 Why Teachers Leave or Return to the Profession; Department for Education (£41,899). PI: Qing **Gu**; Co-I: Christopher **Day**.

4. Details of the impact

Since 2013, Day has acted as a **consulting expert on school leadership for various policy-making and professional organisations** (such as the DfE, England; CONICYT [Comission National de Investigation Cientifica Tecnologica, Government of Chile]; and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership). He is currently a Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of Education Support (ES), a national charity supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all educators in the UK. He has served as a Director/Trustee of White Hills Park School Federation Trust (WHPFT) in Nottingham, where he has advised on the delivery of services that improved schools' performance, through his Chairing of the Academic Achievement and Standards Committee (2014-2018). He is currently a Trustee of the Djanogly Learning Trust, and Chair of its Achievement, Standards and Wellbeing Committee. The major impacts associated with Day's research and advisory work are presented in the below paragraphs.

Shaping education policy

Day's research on successful school leadership (R1, 2, 3, 4, 5) has informed policy debate and reforms in **England**. In 2017, DfE implemented new guidance on headteacher recruitment in England, informed by Day's research (A1). Its 2010 National Leaders of Education standards cite Day's work several times, acknowledging that: *"Drawing on their [Day et al., R4] significant experiences of school improvement, NLEs will develop the capabilities of the supported leader"* (A2, p.4).

Through his work as Vice-Chair of the Trustees of Education Support, Day has contributed to policy discussions with both DfE and the Department of Health, and unions and mental health charities. A range of these actors now engage in an ES-led policy forum, the 'Research and Development Wellbeing' Group, which Day established (B).

At an **international** level, Day's research (R6, G2) and advisory work with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (since 2013) has fed into the Australian national policy guidelines on "Leading for impact" (C1), and the "Western Australia school leadership strategy" (C2).

ISSPP has contributed to successful school principalship becoming a priority in educational policy agendas and more widely (D). For instance, in 2015 research from the ISSPP network was cited in response to a Government inquiry on the role of pedagogical leadership of headteachers on the quality and development of school operations in Sweden: *"There is evidence that this Governmental inquiry, which used ISSPP research ..., has led to incremental changes in the way politicians and school leaders' practice and talk about their work."* Moreover, the ISSPP research results have been described as *"central"* for the Swedish Government's Reform project "Cooperation for Better Schools", following this inquiry (D). In Norway, ISSPP findings received

substantial public attention and were cited in several governmental Green and White papers between 2015 and 2017 (D).

Optimising organisational strategy, services, and outcomes

In **Nottingham**, Day has worked with academy trusts (G3-5) to develop programmes to support effective leadership and schools improvement (G, H): *“As a direct result of our work with Professor Day, we have significantly improved the quality of teaching ... Professor Day has a significant impact on the strategy of the schools used to raise standards. One of the huge achievements is that students’ rate of Maths at the Bramcote School increased by 24% from 2014 to 2018”*. Two of the schools *“...have improved Ofsted ... rating from “Requires Improvement” in 2014/15 to “Good” in 2017”* (H).

In **England**, Day’s research has also directly impacted upon the work of Education Support: *“... [his] role for (re)shaping the strategy and, consequently, the services provided by ES(P) is key”* (B). Between 2018 and 2019 alone, in addition to the provision of other services to over 600 educational organisations, the charity’s helpline received around 10,000 calls from education workers, around 90% of whom were teachers in primary and secondary education.

Internationally, Day’s work has had a significant influence on successful school leadership strategies in educational organisations (D, E). Research project G1 *“...informed 2020 CEDP Priorities which are the basis of all system guidelines and policy particularly in relation to the support of Learning in schools”* (I). In response to G2, the AIS: *“... redefined the concept of ‘middle leadership’ and reshaped our approach to ‘working ‘in’ the middle’ through a series of initiatives involving both the program leaders and participants”* that prompted the improvement in the AIS’s leadership programme, which *“...has, consequently, led to positive changes in teacher skill-sets and school leadership practice”* (F, R6). The Arizona Initiative for Leadership Development and Research drew on ISSPP’s work to make improvements in student outcomes in its 75 supported schools: *“...in the first iteration of the project from 2013-15, 57% of participating schools improved student outcomes in school labels. In the second iteration from 2015-2017, over 80% of participating schools made these gains in student outcomes”* (D).

Enriching individuals’ capacities and practices

In **Nottingham**, Day’s work with the Transform Trust has centred on a schools-university knowledge exchange project across eight schools serving disadvantaged urban communities (G, G4). This led to better practices in teaching and learning. School principals report staff have increased their knowledge post-training, implemented the newly learned skills into their work, and become more efficient in their day-to-day practice (J). Day also facilitated collaborative projects between the White Hills Park Federation Trust and schools from Australia and China. This, in turn, enhanced the professional development of (head)teachers and subsequently improved teaching and leadership practice (H).

Internationally, his work with the Australian Association of Independent Schools led to improvements in its training programme and subsequent outcomes: *“...approximately 60 participants in the programme have...been greatly influenced by Professor Day’s work and research. ...approximately 10% per cent... have subsequently been promoted to senior leadership roles. ... their professional identities had changed by the end of the programme”* (I).

ISSPP activities have laid the foundations of sustainable school leadership improvement through new research-informed programmes internationally (D, E), with *“... multi-levels of impact, including improved skill levels and career development of academic members, development and implementation of new educational programmes, and improved teaching practices”* (D). Highlights include influence on the Swedish National Principal Training Programme and new higher degrees in Australia, Mexico, Norway and USA, which have educated thousands of professionals to date (D).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Department for Education. Guidelines: 1. Recruiting a Headteacher, 2017, Ref: DFE-00318-2017, and 2. National Leaders of Education (NLE) standards with research commentary, 2020, Ref: DfE-00049-2020.
- B. Stakeholder Letter from Education Support (Previously, Education Support Partnership).
- C. School Leadership Development in Australia. Guidelines: 1. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2018). Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development and 2. Learning First (2016). Western Australia school leadership strategy.
- D. Stakeholder Letters from the ISSPP network. *Includes five letters from Australia, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, and USA.*
- E. International Successful School Principals Project (ISSPP), <https://www.uv.uio.no/ils/english/research/projects/isspp/#:~:text=International%20Successful%20School%20Principals%20Project&text=Representatives%20from%20eight%20nations%20agreed,Sweden%20and%20the%20United%20States>. *Screenshot is also available.*
- F. Stakeholder Letter from Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta, NSW Australia.
- G. Stakeholder Letter from Transform Trust.
- H. Stakeholder Letter from White Hills Park Federation Trust, Nottingham.
- I. Stakeholder Letters from Association of Independent Schools of NSW, Australia and Leading from the Middle - A School-based Strategy for Middle Leaders in Schools Report.
- J. Impact on schools in disadvantaged urban areas – video-interviews with stakeholders. *Includes a sample of four interviews. Includes a sample of four interviews with members of staff in three schools. Due to format specifics, this evidence is stored at UoN and is available on request.*